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**Economic Commission for Europe****Steering Committee on Trade Capacity and Standards****Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards****Specialized Section on Standardization of Fresh Fruit and Vegetables****Sixty-eighth session**

Geneva, 6—8 May 2020

Item 4 of the provisional agenda

**Standard Layout for United Nations Economic Commission for Europe****Standards for Fresh Fruit and Vegetables****Discussion paper by the delegation from the Netherlands on  
the proposal to increase the total tolerance allowed within  
Class II tolerances \*****Submitted by the secretariat**

The following document was received from the delegation of the Netherlands for consideration by the Specialized Section.

This document is submitted according to ECE/CTCS/2019/10 section IV, ECE/CTCS/2019/2 Decision 2019-8.6, and A/74/6 (Sect.20) and supplementary information.

**Introduction**

During the meeting of the Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards (WP.7) of November 2019, the Netherlands presented a study by the Wageningen University (WUR) on the impact of cosmetic requirements of fresh fruit and vegetables (FFV) on food loss and waste. The main conclusion of the study -and proposal of the Netherlands- was that relaxing the cosmetic requirements for Class II FFV products (shape, colour and skin) could contribute to the reduction of food waste by helping to get consumers used to deviating products. The availability of FFV products with a minor cosmetic defect to consumers could lead to less waste and loss.

An alternative way to facilitate a reduction in food loss and waste through an increase of the availability of FFV products with a minor cosmetic defect, could be an increase of the tolerance allowed within Class II, as previously proposed by the delegation from the United Kingdom in 2018. During the WP.7 meeting in November 2019, the delegations agreed to reconsider the proposal by the United Kingdom during the discussions on the Standard

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\* Submitted on the above date due to delayed document inputs.

Layout at the May 2020 session of the Specialized Section on Standardization of Fresh Fruit. The delegation from the United Kingdom has resubmitted the proposal for this meeting.

### **Proposal by the United Kingdom**

Under IV. - Provisions concerning tolerances:

#### Quality tolerance, Class II

Increase of tolerance for products, satisfying neither the requirements of the Class nor the minimum requirements allowed within Class II, from 10% to 20%.

The tolerance for decay (max 2 per cent within the total tolerance of 20 per cent) should not be changed.

#### Size tolerances

Increase a total tolerance of 20 per cent, by number or weight, of {name of produce} not satisfying the requirements as regards sizing is allowed.

### **Comments by the delegation from the Netherlands**

The delegation from the Netherlands supports the proposal by the United Kingdom regarding the increase of the quality and size tolerances for Class II FFV products.

### **Arguments**

- Food loss and waste has become an active societal concern. Compared to a few years ago, the awareness that food products should not be wasted and lost has become much stronger. As we witness today, even when the corona pandemic and the measures to fight it have serious economic repercussions for various agricultural sectors, including some FFV sectors, producers, market operators and consumers have joined forces to save food products in various countries.
- Food loss and waste is also a UNECE concern. With a view to the need for worldwide sustainable consumption and production patterns of food (SDG12), UNECE encourages countries, producers, traders and retailers to take measures to minimize loss and waste of FFV products (Code of Good Practice etc.).
- Food waste and loss occurs at every stage of the food chain (particularly in the production, retail and consumption stage).

The impact of the UNECE quality standards on food waste is not clearly established. Nevertheless, in the retail stage, relaxing the tolerance of defects in size, shape, colour and skin of class II FFV products could help consumers to get used to deviating products and promote human consumption (including processing industry) of edible products with a cosmetic defect.

In addition, the Netherlands would like to propose a mandatory “food waste assessment” to be carried out for any future revision of the FFV UNECE standards.

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