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Steering Committee on Trade Capacity and Standards

Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards

Specialized Section on Standardization
of Dry and Dried Produce

Sixty-fourth session

Geneva, 5-7 July 2017

Report of the Sixty-fourth session of the Specialized Section on Standardization of Dry and Dried Produce

I. Introduction

1. The Chair of the Specialized Section, Mr. Dorian LaFond (United States of America), opened the session and welcomed delegates.
2. The Chief of the Market Access Section of the UNECE Secretariat, Mr. Mika Vepsäläinen, welcomed participants. He introduced Mr. Korkut Yavuz as the new staff member who will assist the secretariat in its work on agricultural quality standards. He emphasized that all United Nations agencies were currently aligning their work with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and encouraged the Specialized Section to examine how its work supported the SDGs. He stressed the importance of continued close collaboration between UNECE and other international organizations, particularly the Codex Alimentarius Committees. He noted that UNECE would attend the Codex Alimentarius Commission session in mid-July 2017 and participate in a discussion on partnering for supporting the implementation of SDG 17 on revitalizing global partnerships. He encouraged the Specialized Section to reflect on and discuss its future work including a possible broadening of focus to respond to the increased demand for accompanying measures and the support for the implementation of UNECE standards. In other Specialized Sections of the Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards (WP.7) this had resulted in new areas of work including on food loss, traceability, baseline quality requirements and codes of good practice.

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II. Attendance

3. Representatives of the following countries attended the meeting: Estonia, France, Germany, Islamic Republic of Iran, Spain, Turkey and the United States of America.
4. A representative of the following intergovernmental organization participated in the session: Codex Alimentarius Commission, Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Programme.
5. A representative of the following non-governmental organization participated in the meeting: The International Nut and Dried Fruit Council (INC).
6. An intern from the Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations and other international organisations in Geneva was also present.

III. Adoption of the agenda

7. Delegations adopted the agenda without amendments.

IV. Matters of interest since the last session

(a) UNECE and subsidiary bodies

8. The secretariat informed the delegates that United Nations Secretary-General Mr. Antonio Guterres had appointed Ms. Olga Algayerova of the Slovak Republic as the UNECE's new Executive Secretary. He noted that the UNECE had taken budget cuts in this and next biennium (2018-2019) including posts, consultancy, printing and travel funds. For the moment, the secretariat of WP.7 availed of project funds which covered some of the losses. Fund-raising will continue in the future and a new project on food loss might start in 2018. The secretariat announced that the Steering Committee on Trade Capacity and Standards had held its annual session on 12-13 April 2017 and the work of WP.7 had been very well received, with several delegations expressing interest in linking its work with that of other bodies such as the Working Party on Regulatory Cooperation and Standardization Policies (WP.6), as well as the Environment and the Transport Divisions. He expressed his sincere gratitude for the contribution by the Specialized Sections to a Farmer's Market organized by the secretariat at the annual session (on the occasion of UNECE's 70th anniversary) in April. This, he added, had provided an excellent opportunity to showcase the work of WP.7 to a large international audience including high-level decision makers. Delegations thanked the secretariat for this and related activities which increased WP.7's visibility and profile.

(b) Other organizations

9. The representative of the International Nut and Dried Fruit Council (INC) emphasized that standards played an important role in international trade and as a key reference in commercial contracts. He stressed that the INC would continue to support UNECE in standardization and its related work and activities. He also reported that the INC had held its 36th World Nut and Dried Fruit Congress in Chennai, India, on 19-21 May 2017, which had attracted over 1 000 participants from 73 countries. He invited delegations to the INC's next congress which will be held on 21-23 May 2018 in Seville, Spain.

10. The representative of the Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC) informed the meeting that the 28th Session of the Codex Committee on Processed Fruits and Vegetables (CCPFV) finalized the annexes on: canned pineapples for inclusion in the Standard for Certain Canned Fruits (Codex Stan 318-2015), and for quick frozen vegetables for inclusion in the Standard for Quick Frozen Vegetables (Codex Stan 320-2015); and

consequentially revoked several standards. The CCPFV had agreed that proposals for new work should be submitted directly to the 40th session of CAC (17-22 July 2017) for approval and that the Committee had not yet set a date for its next session. Other ongoing work of interest included the paperless use of electronic certificates; regulatory approaches to third-party assurance schemes in food safety and fair practices in the food trade and discussions on food authenticity/integrity currently under consideration by the Codex Committee on Food Import and Export Inspection and Certification Systems (CCFICS). He further reported that the 40th session of the Commission would consider the recommendations of CCPFV including the proposals for new work (i.e. cashew kernels; dried persimmon; dried sweet potatoes; dried fruits.) and set mechanisms for undertaking this new work as well as the date for the next session of CCPFV. The 40th session would also include a panel discussion of international organizations to reflect on the question of Codex and partnerships.

V. Review of existing standards and related explanatory brochures

(a) Walnut kernels

11. The Specialized Section revised the draft UNECE Standard for Walnut Kernels, building on the detailed discussions held during the informal preparatory meeting prior to the official session. A number of amendments were introduced for provisions concerning sizing (styles), size/style tolerances and uniformity requirements. After lengthy discussions, delegations could not agree on new definitions for “halves” and “chipped kernels”, but arrived at the consensus to keep the definitions for these two styles as laid down in the current 2002 version of the standard. All changes made to the draft standard will be reflected in the post-session document.

12. The Specialized decided to submit the amended UNECE Standard for Walnut Kernels for adoption by the Working Party in November 2017.

(b) Inshell almonds

13. The Specialized Section reviewed the proposal made by the delegation of Germany to revise the UNECE Standard for Inshell Almonds, which suggested a change in the definition of the term “intact” so an opening at the suture of soft and semi-soft shell almonds was not considered as a defect. The delegations agreed to the proposed change, which will be reflected in the post-session document.

14. The Specialized Section decided to submit the revised UNECE Standard for Inshell Almonds for adoption by the Working Party in November 2017.

(c) Explanatory brochure for walnut kernels

15. The Specialized Section reviewed the Explanatory Brochure for Walnut Kernels in parallel to the revised draft standard for walnut kernels. All changes made to the draft standard were reflected in the brochure. A working group (France, Germany and the United States) had convened prior to the official session to examine the brochure in detail and suggested a series of additional changes in the photos, texts and explanatory interpretation.

16. It was agreed that the United States delegation would coordinate an electronic working group (France, Germany and the United States) for consultations, with the aim to finalize the brochure by the end of August and then have the secretariat circulate it among delegations. If delegation agreed to that draft, it would be translated into French and printed in both languages.

VI. Sampling plan for Tree Nuts and Dried Produce and Guidelines for Inspections for Dry and Dried Produce

17. The Specialized Section discussed the draft Sampling Plan for Tree Nuts and Dried Products and Guidelines for Inspections for Dry and Dried Produce. The Section reviewed the draft text and introduced several changes, which will be reflected in the post-session document. The delegations agreed that a practical workshop was needed to validate the sampling plan. The INC offered to organize a practical workshop in 2018, and emphasized that representatives of the private sector should also participate in the workshop to enable relevant parties to discuss and test the sampling and inspection practices explained in the document.

18. The INC will inform the secretariat about possible dates and locations for the workshop by the end of October 2017, for circulation among delegations. A working group will record the findings of the workshop in a revised version of the sampling plan which the secretariat will distribute for discussion at the next Specialized Section meeting in 2018.

VII. Development of new standards

19. The Chairman thanked the secretariat for contacting the producing and exporting countries to facilitate the work on new draft Standards for Dried Coconut Pieces, Dried Bananas and Dried Ripe Papaya.

(a) Draft UNECE Standards for Dried Coconut Pieces

20. The Specialized Section reviewed the draft UNECE Standard for Coconut Pieces in detail, and made several changes to: the definition of produce by including “desiccated coconuts”, an item covered by a Codex Standard; minimum requirements; moisture content; sizing; quality requirements; uniformity and marking and nature of produce. The definitions of terms in the annex of the proposed draft were either moved to the definition of produce, to Annex III of the Standard Layout, or deleted. The section on presentation was removed in alignment with the Standards Layout. The changes introduced will be reflected in the post-session document.

21. The Specialized Section decided to submit the revised document to the Working Party for adoption as a Recommendation for a 1-year trial period, and discuss it further at the 2018 session of the next Specialized Section.

(b) Draft UNECE Standards for Dried Bananas

22. The Specialized Section reviewed the draft UNECE Standard for Dried Bananas in detail, and made several changes to the definition of produce; minimum quality requirements; moisture content; sizing; quality tolerances; uniformity; marking; nature of produce and commercial specifications. The definitions of terms in the annex of the proposed draft were either moved to the definition of produce, to Annex III of the Standard Layout, or deleted. The section on presentation was removed in alignment with the Standards Layout. The Rapporteur (United States) noted that the current draft covered both ripe and unripe bananas. The changes introduced will be reflected in the post-session document.

23. The Specialized Section decided to submit the revised document to the Working Party for adoption as a Recommendation for a 1-year trial period, and discuss it further at the 2018 session of the Specialized Section.

(c) **Draft UNECE Standards for Dried Papaya**

24. The Specialized Section reviewed the draft UNECE Standard for Dried Papaya in detail. The title of the standard was changed to “Dried Ripe Papaya” and several changes were introduced to: the definition of produce; minimum quality requirements; moisture content; provisions concerning tolerances; quality tolerances; uniformity; packaging; nature of produce and commercial specifications. The definitions of terms in the annex of the proposed draft were either moved to the definition of produce, to Annex III of the Standard Layout, or deleted. The section on presentation was removed in alignment with the Standards Layout.

25. The Specialized Section decided to consider the draft as work in progress. All changes introduced at the present session will be reflected in the post-session document. The revised draft will be discussed at the 2018 session of the Specialized Section.

VIII. Alignment and revision of standards

(a) **Prunes**

26. The Specialized Section thanked the delegation of France for preparing the draft for the revision of the UNECE Standard for Prunes. The Rapporteur (France) briefly explained that the majority of the proposed changes were linked to the alignment of the existing version of the standard with the new standard layout.

27. As the English version of the revised draft had been issued too late for English-speaking delegations to review, the Specialized Section decided to continue its work on the draft revised standard in an electronic working group. The item will be kept on the agenda of the 2018 session. The delegation of France offered to serve as Rapporteur and invited other delegations to send them their comments. The secretariat will contact other producing countries for their input to the new draft standard. The Specialized Section will hold an informal session to advance this work prior to the 2018 session of the Specialized Section.

IX. Explanatory posters

(a) **Dried apricots**

28. The Rapporteur (Turkey) provided background information on the development of the dried apricot poster, which had been prepared in collaboration with a Central Asian working group (Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan). Delegations expressed their preference for the proposed poster contained in INF.9 which included photos of dried apricots from different producing regions.

29. The delegation of the United States proposed that, in the future, the Specialized Section reflect on posters which also depicted the limits allowed for defects (which is currently not the case). This could be very helpful for producers and inspectors. Other delegations noted that this was interpretative work and would require more in-depth discussions and could lead to the development of a brochure.

30. It was decided that Turkey would work with the Central Asian Working Group to produce a final version of the dried apricot poster in accordance with comments received from the Specialized Section, and submit this final version to the secretariat within two weeks.

(b) Inshell walnuts and walnut kernels

31. The Specialized Section reviewed the draft posters for inshell walnuts and walnut kernels, and suggested several amendments to the text and photos. Existing photos in other UNECE material that illustrate colour classifications as well as the styles described in the inshell walnut standard would be included in the posters. The Rapporteur (United States) agreed to provide the UNECE secretariat with the photos from the explanatory brochure for inshell walnuts and the new brochure on walnut kernels so these could be included in the posters. The Chairman encouraged other delegations to provide additional photos.

32. The Specialized Section decided to proceed with the work on the posters for inshell walnuts and walnut kernels after the brochure for walnut kernels was finalized by a working group coordinated by the United States. The delegation of the United States will work with the secretariat to create a final draft for the posters, which would be circulated by the secretariat.

(c) Inshell Pistachio Nuts

33. The Rapporteur (Iran) presented the draft poster for inshell pistachio nuts, underlining that more photos would be available after this year's harvest, in September. It was decided that the draft poster would be sent to the secretariat and circulated within the Specialized Section for comments and suggestions.

34. The secretariat clarified that the printing of all of the explanatory posters was an activity funded by a project and the last possible deadline for finalization and printing financed by project funds was mid-November 2017.

X. Sustainable Development Goals and the work of the Specialized Section

35. The secretariat explained that all United Nations agencies were required to map their work with the SDGs and their targets for 2030, and asked the Specialized Section to discuss how UNECE's work in the field of dry and dried produce contributed to achieving those Goals. The Specialized Section based its discussion of the work of the section and the SDGs on the mapping exercise carried out by the Specialized Section for Fruit and Vegetables, and developed a new document that reflected the particularities of the dry and dried produce sector. The document will be available on the UNECE website as a post-session document.

XI. Other business

36. No matters were raised by the Specialized Section under this agenda item.

XII. Future work

37. The Specialized Section decided to include the following items on the 2018 agenda:

- New UNECE Standard for Inshell Cashew Nuts
- Alignment and revision of the UNECE Standard for Prunes
- Recommendations for dried coconut pieces and dried bananas
- Draft Standard for Dried Ripe Papaya
- Sampling Plan and Inspection Guidelines, with the accompanying workshop mentioned under Item VI.
- Alignment of other dry and dried produce standards to the standard layout

- Poster for inshell pistachio nuts
- Development of explanatory posters for other produce

38. The Specialized Section also discussed the possibility of holding a joint or back-to-back informal workshop with the INC World Nut and Dried Fruit Congress which will take place 21-23 May 2018 in Seville, Spain. The secretariat will approach the INC and the Chairman of the INC Scientific Committee to inquire about this possibility.

XIII. Election of officers

39. The Specialized Section elected Mr. Dorian LaFond (United States of America) as Chair until the beginning of its 2018 session.

XIV. Adoption of the report

40. The Specialized Section adopted the report (ECE/CTCS/WP.7/GE.2/2017/2) on its sixty-fourth session. The date and place of its next session will be communicated during the course of 2017.
