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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 Dry and Dried Produce****Sixty-seventh session**

Geneva, 15—17 June 2020

**Report of the sixty-seventh session of the Specialized Section  
on Standardization of Dry and Dried Produce****I. Introduction**

1. Mr. Dorian LaFond (United States) chaired the meeting of the Specialized Section on Standardization of Dry and Dried Produce and welcomed delegates to this online session.

2. The Secretary of the Specialized Section, Ms. Liliana Annovazzi-Jakab, welcomed delegates to the online standardization meeting on behalf of the Director of the Economic Cooperation and Trade Division of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), Ms. Elisabeth Tuerk. She noted that all decisions of the Specialized Section would be approved in an intersessional approval procedure and only then sent to the Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards (WP.7) for adoption in November 2020. The report will be adopted in a written procedure.

3. She expressed her gratitude to the delegates for their work and support in these difficult times. With COVID-19 having spread worldwide, secure food supply and trade was of utmost importance. In this context, she highlighted the newly established UNECE Food Outlook (see <http://www.unece.org/trade/agr/foodoutlook.html>) and encouraged the delegates of the Specialized Section to submit their contributions. She also informed delegations that UNECE had joined the United Nations Issue-based Coalition on Sustainable Food Systems to support United Nations country teams and Resident Coordinators in this crisis and to integrate the development of sustainable food systems with all their dimensions (economic, social and environmental) into national and international food policy agendas.

4. She expressed the UNECE's gratitude to the delegation of Turkey for its offer to host this meeting of the Specialized Section and a workshop in Izmir, Turkey. The COVID-19 outbreak had made this impossible. She also thanked the Specialized Section's experts and the International Nut and Dried Fruit Council (INC) for their readiness to help organize two workshops in Kyrgyzstan in April 2020 which had also been postponed owing to the COVID-19 outbreak. In the interim, the possibility of holding some parts of the workshop as online courses would be explored. She acknowledged with gratitude that the United States delegation had made available to the UNECE secretariat all photos used in the walnut kernel brochure for the development of national training material in Central Asian languages.

## **II. Attendance**

5. Representatives of the following countries attended the meeting: Azerbaijan, France, Germany, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Poland, Spain, Tajikistan, Turkey, United States of America, Uzbekistan.

6. The following specialized programmes and intergovernmental organization participated in the session: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO).

7. Representatives from the following observer organization, non-governmental organizations, associations, academia and private sector groups attended the session: Alimkhan Exim Group, Austrian NGO “Hilfswerk International”, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), DFA of California/Safe Food Alliance, International Nut and Dried Fruit Council (INC), Jahon Exim Group, Quality Management Centre – Tajikistan.

## **III. Adoption of the agenda**

8. The delegations adopted the provisional agenda.

## **IV. Matters arising since the last session**

### **(a) United Nations, United Nations Economic Commission for Europe and subsidiary bodies**

9. The Secretary of the Specialized Section explained that during the current COVID-19 crisis, the offices of the United Nations buildings in Geneva were closed. Staff are telecommuting and gradually returning to the office. More information on physical meetings in the Palais des Nations was expected over the summer months. She also noted that the vacant post in the Agricultural Unit team had been filled just before the current recruitment freeze and introduced the new staff member, Ms. Kamola Khusnutdinova. She mentioned that the next Steering Committee on Trade Capacity and Standards would be held as an informal online session on 29 June 2020.

10. Furthermore, she provided information on the 2019 session of the Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards (WP.7) which included the fourth UNECE-FAO conference on “Food (Waste) for Thought: Food Loss—policy perspectives for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”. The presentations included many topics of interest to this Specialized Section. She also highlighted that WP.7 had decided to organize at its 2020 meeting a roundtable on food loss, food waste and private standards together with the private sector.

### **(b) Recent developments in other organizations**

11. The representative of the International Nut and Dried Fruit Council (INC) stressed the excellent working relations and collaboration with UNECE. She introduced the INC as the principal representative of the global dried fruits and nut industry, with over 840 member companies from 80 countries on five continents which work with over 45 million farmers. She explained the INC’s vision of being the international source for information on nuts and dried fruits on health, nutrition, production statistics, trade and consumption, food safety, government standards and regulations and agricultural quality standards. In this regard, she noted that the INC had published several technical kits based also on the UNECE standards for Brazil nuts, cashew nuts, hazelnuts, macadamia nuts, pine nuts, and peanuts, which are available on the INC’s web site. She mentioned that the INC had launched their annual call for projects improving the safe and sustainable production of nuts and dried fruit, an important contribution to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

12. The representative of the Central Asian Working Group (CAWG) which represents four central Asian countries (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan) stressed the organization's role in promoting UNECE commercial quality standards in Central Asia and thanked the secretariat for organizing this meeting in which the CAWG takes an active role.

## V. Review of existing standards

### Prunes

13. The Specialized Section reviewed the revised Recommendation for prunes, which had been extended by the Working Party in November 2019, together with proposals submitted by the Rapporteur (France), and the delegations from Germany, Kyrgyzstan, United States and Uzbekistan. The Specialized Section adopted amendments and proposals.

14. As several provisions required further consultations, it was agreed that the following proposed amendments would be revised during the next 3 months (i.e. until 18 September 2020):

- Sizing for pitted prunes: As there is currently no nomenclature for sized pitted prunes, the delegation from France proposed to develop a table for consultation. The secretariat was requested to facilitate the ensuing discussing with other producing countries and regions and organize a follow-up online session in late September 2020.
- Uniformity of size: the delegation from Kyrgyzstan requested consultation time to review the proposed sampling.
- Table of tolerances (end cracks): the delegation from Kyrgyzstan requested time for consultation on the proposed lower tolerance for end cracks which might be difficult to meet for emerging export industries.
- Table of tolerance (for "Among pitted prunes, whole pits and pieces of pits (by number)"): the delegations requested consultation time to study the new proposal by the United States to lower the tolerances and proposed 1.0 per cent for Class I and Class II.
- Nature of produce: the delegation from France requested consultation time to consider the proposal of making the indication of the "Name of variety" optional.

15. All agreed changes, as well as changes for consultation (in square brackets), are included in the post-session document (see <http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=52651>)

16. The Specialized Section decided to submit the revised draft to the Working Party session in November 2020 for adoption as a revised UNECE standard if agreement on the open issues highlighted above can be achieved prior to the session.

## VI. Development of new standards

### (a) Inshell pecans

17. At its 2019 session, the Specialized Section decided to continue its work on the development of standards for pecan nuts (inshell and kernels) which had been pending for several years. The Specialized Section reviewed the new draft standard for inshell pecans, proposed by the delegation from Germany and amended some provisions. The post-session document with the agreed text and text under discussion (in square brackets) is available at <http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=52651>

18. The Specialized Section decided to submit the revised draft to the Working Party session in November 2020 for adoption as a UNECE Recommendation for Inshell pecans for a 1-year trial period.

**(b) Pecan kernels**

19. The Specialized Section reviewed the new draft standard for pecan kernels proposed by the delegation from Germany and amended several provisions. The post-session document with the agreed text and text under discussion (in square brackets) is available at <http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=52651>.

20. The Specialized Section decided to submit the new draft text to the Working Party session in November 2020 for adoption as a UNECE Recommendation for Pecan kernels for a 1-year trial period.

**(c) Dried persimmons**

21. The representative of the Central Asian Working Group (CAWG) gave a presentation on the proposal to develop a standard for dried persimmons stressing the uniqueness of the produce for the Central Asian region. Persimmon being one of the main fruit crops in Central Asia, many producers have proceeded to drying the produce and exporting it. The statistics show not only a steadily increasing production but also a growing international demand. He stressed that a standard would help develop the uniformity and quality of dried persimmon production and trade, and would help increase export and market access.

22. The Specialized Section reviewed the proposed draft standard submitted by the Central Asian Working Group (CAWG) and Tajikistan and amended it. Given the need for further consultations and amendments, the Specialized Section decided to create a working group led by the rapporteur (Tajikistan) with the participation of the delegations from Germany, Turkey and the United States. The working group was asked to review all the sections currently placed in square brackets including the minimum requirements (determining whether there is need to distinguish peeled and unpeeled dried persimmons), moisture content (determination of treatment used in producing countries), sizing, and quality tolerances (determination whether there is a need for differentiating between peeled and unpeeled dried persimmons).

23. The Specialized Section considered the current draft standard as a work in progress and decided to place this item on the agenda of the Specialized Section's 2021 session.

**(d) Apricot kernels**

24. The delegation from Tajikistan presented an overview of the production and trade of apricot kernels in the Central Asian countries stressing the large production volume of apricot kernels of bitter or sweet taste and the increased export demand in the past years. He noted that producers and exporters currently applied the UNECE standard for almond kernels. He also emphasized that an international standard would enhance the uniform requirements of this produce and its quality and, therefore, also international trade and market access. It was stressed that the standard would not cover roasted and toasted kernels, only dried produce.

25. The Specialized Section reviewed the proposed draft standard and approved several amendments. All changes are available in the post-session document at <http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=52651>.

26. The Specialized Section decided to submit the draft standard to the Working Party's November 2020 session for adoption as a new UNECE Recommendation for Apricot kernels for an initial one-year trial period.

**(e) Inshell peanuts and peanuts kernels**

27. The delegation from Tajikistan presented an overview of the production and trade of peanuts in the Central Asian region and highlighted the large production and increasing trade volumes. He noted that producers and exporters currently applied national standards and stressed that UNECE standards could enhance the uniform trading requirements for this produce and its quality and help increase export and market access.

28. The Chair of the Specialized Section pointed to the existence of a Codex Standard for peanuts (raw) from 1995. The delegation from Germany stressed that only roasted peanuts were sold to consumers for direct consumption, whereas trade imported raw peanuts. The inclusion of roasted peanuts would make it possible to use the standards at all marketing stages – also in importing countries. The Specialized Section therefore decided to include also roasted peanuts (inshell and kernels) in these new UNECE standards. The title of the two standards was changed to “Raw and roasted inshell peanuts” and “Raw and roasted peanut kernels”.

29. The Specialized Section reviewed the draft standards and amended several sections. The sections that required the addition of particular provisions for roasted peanuts were placed in square brackets for consultations with industry. All agreed revisions are included in the post-session document available at <http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=52651>. The working group, led by the Rapporteur (Tajikistan), with the delegations from Germany and the United States, would work on the draft standards until next year’s session.

30. The Specialized Section decided to keep the new draft standard for Raw and roasted inshell peanuts and for Raw and roasted peanut kernels as works in progress to be added to the 2021 agenda of the Specialized Section.

## **VII. Results of the impact assessment survey in Central Asia**

31. At its 2019 session, the Specialized Section requested the secretariat to prepare, together with UNDP Uzbekistan and the collaborating donor agencies (Hilfswerk International and GIZ), an impact assessment of the inter-agency capacity-building work in Central Asia since 2015. The secretariat highlighted in a summary presentation the results of this assessment. It stressed the concrete impact achieved during the past years, including inflowing investment, trade, export, adoption and use of standards. The work, the impact assessment revealed, had led to increased employment and income generation, also for women. The secretariat also encouraged countries to send anecdotal evidence and statistics which it would be glad to showcase. The detailed summary presentation with more results is available at: <http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=52651>.

32. The secretary and the Chair thanked all agencies involved as well as the all expert trainers from the Specialized Section who helped achieved these results. They also thanked the INC and the INC’s secretariat for their relentless support in this work. The secretariat also stressed that workshops postponed this year due to COVID-19 would be held next year and options for online training are currently being explored. The representative of the collaborating agency, Hilfswerk International, thanked the UNECE secretariat for the fruitful cooperation over many years which had led to many concrete and tangible results.

## **VIII. Sampling plan for tree nuts and dried produce and guidelines for inspections of dry and dried produce**

33. The Chair of the Specialized Section explained that the sampling plan which had been a work in progress for several years had been adopted by the Specialized Section in 2019. He noted that since the 2018 Specialized Section session, working meetings had been organized in Naples, Italy, and in Izmir, Turkey, to validate the sampling plan. At the 2019 WP.7 session, the delegation from Turkey had requested more time for the finalization and amendment of some provisions.

34. The Specialized Section took note of the request by the delegation from Turkey that further clarifications were needed for the sampling of very small and large produce and the possible distinction in the sampling procedure used for very small and large products. In addition, the delegation from Turkey stressed the need for the uniform interpretation by the inspectors in the producing and importing countries and their buyers and sellers. This, the delegate of Turkey stressed, was only possible to achieve in a sampling plan validation workshop with the participation of the Specialized Section’s experts, inspectors, buyers and

producers. Owing to the COVID-19 outbreak, the scheduled June 2020 workshop had to be cancelled this year.

35. The delegation from Turkey offered to work on the sampling plan in the coming 2 months (until 18 August 2020) and to include necessary amendments for larger and smaller produce in the sampling plan document. In parallel, the delegation from Turkey will also update the related illustrative guide.

36. The Specialized Section decided to review the amendments and approve them in an intersessional approval procedure. If approved, the Specialized Section will submit the sampling plan guidelines to the Working Party session in November 2020 for adoption. The delegation from Turkey offered to host a dedicated workshop in 2021 in Izmir, Turkey. The Specialized Section requested the secretariat to explore possibilities for this workshop to be held together with an informal session of the Specialized Section.

## **IX. Revision of the Standard Layout**

37. The Specialized Section reviewed in detail the provisions of the Standard Layout for Dry and Dried Produce and its annexes as well as the proposed amendments. All agreed revisions are included in the post-session document available at <http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=52651>.

38. The Specialized Section decided to submit the revised Standard Layout for adoption by the Working Party at its November 2020 session.

## **X. Explanatory materials**

### **(a) Dried apricots – explanatory brochure**

39. The leader of the working group on an explanatory brochure for dried apricots (Tajikistan) thanked the Specialized Section and the delegations from Germany, Poland, Turkey, and the United States for their comments during the past year. All comments except those from Turkey had already been integrated in the most recent draft.

40. The Specialized Section reviewed the comments from Turkey and amended the text accordingly. Turkey had provided comments and some alternative photos, some of which were already integrated into the final version. The Rapporteur (Tajikistan) will update the brochure in the coming 2 months (until 18 August 2020).

41. The Specialized Section decided to approve the revised final version of the brochure in an intersessional approval procedure and subsequently recommend its adoption by the Working Party in November 2020 as a new UNECE Explanatory Brochure for Dried Apricots. The Specialized Section asked the secretariat to prepare and publish the brochure on its website, once adopted. The Specialized Section thanked the delegations from Tajikistan, Turkey, the Central Asian Working Group and all other contributing delegations for their work.

### **(b) Dried figs – poster**

42. The Specialized Section reviewed the draft poster for dried figs prepared by the delegation from Turkey and provided some recommendations.

43. The Specialized Section approved the new poster for dried figs and recommended it be submitted to the November 2020 session of the Working Party for adoption. The Specialized Section asked the secretariat to prepare and publish the poster on its website, once adopted. The Specialized Section thanked the Rapporteur (Turkey) for the work.

**(c) Dried grapes – poster**

44. The Rapporteur (Turkey) outlined the changes made to the poster for dried grapes in the past year. The Specialized Section provided some more comments which the Rapporteur will include in the final version.

45. The Rapporteur will prepare the final version for review and approval by the Specialized Section in a written procedure. Should the final version be approved, the draft poster would be submitted to the November 2020 session of the Working Party for adoption.

46. The Specialized Section asked the secretariat to prepare and publish the poster on its website, once adopted. The Specialized Section thanked the Rapporteur (Turkey), Uzbekistan and the Central Asian Working Group for the work.

**(d) Walnut kernels – poster**

47. The Specialized Section reviewed the explanatory poster for walnut kernels and introduced several changes to the caption text and in the part on quality defects. The Rapporteur (United States) was also invited to provide alternative photos for “Foreign Matter and extraneous matter”, as well as for the natural colour variations of walnut kernels.

48. The Specialized Section will adopt the final version of the poster in an intersessional approval procedure. If approved, the poster will be submitted for adoption to the 2020 session of the Working Party. The Specialized Section asked the secretariat to prepare and publish the poster on its website, once adopted. The Specialized Section thanked the Rapporteur (United States) for the work.

**(e) Cashew kernels – poster**

49. The Rapporteur (INC) led the review of the explanatory poster for cashew kernels which was prepared with the help of the delegation from India. As the poster also included the defect “spotted”—which is currently not included in the UNECE Cashew kernel standard—and the cashew kernel standard had been last revised in 2013, it was decided to revise the UNECE cashew standard in 2021.

50. The Specialized Section agreed to postpone the finalization of the poster until after the revision of the cashew kernel standard in 2021.

**(f) Prunes – poster**

51. The Rapporteur (Kyrgyzstan) presented the first draft of the explanatory poster for prunes to the Specialized Section. The Specialized Section had no further comments.

52. The Specialized Section decided to approve the draft poster and submit it for adoption by the Working Party at its 2020 session. The Specialized Section asked the secretariat to prepare and publish the poster on its website, once adopted. The Specialized Section thanked the delegation from Kyrgyzstan and the Central Asian Working Group.

**XI. Future work**

53. The Specialized Section decided to place the following items on the agenda for 2021:

- Recommendation for pecan kernels and inshell pecan nuts
- Recommendation for apricot kernels
- Draft standard for dried persimmon
- Draft standard for raw and roasted inshell peanuts
- Draft standard for raw and roasted peanut kernels

- Cashew kernel standard
- Review of the explanatory poster on cashew kernels
- Sampling plan workshop

54. Any other proposals for future work should be sent to the secretariat as early as possible, preferably by 1 February 2021.

55. The date and venue of the next session will be communicated in the coming months. The possibility of holding a sampling workshop in conjunction with an informal session of the Specialized Section at a venue outside Geneva would be explored. Should a follow-up session be held, the results of the session would be adopted in a written procedure or at a formal session prior to the 2020 Working Party.

## **XII. Election of officers**

56. The Specialized Section elected Mr. Dorian LaFond (United States) as Chair of the Specialized Section and Ms. Aysegül Uluhan (Turkey) and Mr. Umed Aslanov (Tajikistan) as Vice-Chairs.

## **XIII. Adoption of the report**

57. The Specialized Section adopted the report of the session in a written procedure.

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