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COMMITTEE FOR TRADE, INDUSTRY AND
ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT

Working Party on Standardization of
Perishable Produce and Quality Development

Specialized Section on Standardization of
Early and Ware Potatoes

19-21 March 2001, Geneva

Item 2 of the Provisional Agenda

MATTERS OF INTEREST ARISING SINCE THE FOURTEENTH SESSION

Note by the secretariat

This document sums up the relevant outcome of the third and fourth sessions of the Committee for Trade, Industry and Enterprise Development and the fifty-fifth session of the Working Party on Standardization of Perishable Produce and Quality Development.

THIRD SESSION OF THE COMMITTEE FOR TRADE, INDUSTRY AND ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT

The following excerpt is taken from the report of the Committee (ECE/TRADE/231, paragraphs 34 to 37):

6(b) Working Party on Standardization of Perishable Produce and Quality Development

Documentation: TRADE/WP.7/1998/9 Report of the Fifty-Fourth Session of the Working Party on Standardization of Perishable Produce and Quality Development
TRADE/1999/3 Working Party on Standardization of Perishable Produce and Quality Development: Note by the secretariat

34. The Vice-Chair of the Working Party on Standardization of Perishable Produce and Quality Development (WP.7), Mr. David Priester (United States), gave an overview of the results of its November 1998 session, as well as of the sessions of its specialized sections on early and ware potatoes and meat which had taken place since then. In addition, he reported on cooperation with the European Union and various international organizations (the OECD and the WHO/FAO Codex Alimentarius Commission) and informed the Committee of the new Internet World Wide Web site created by the secretariat, which contains the texts of the standards, as well as information on meetings (<http://www.unece.org/trade/agr/welcome.htm>). The Committee then endorsed this report of the fifty-fourth session of the Working Party.

35. The Chair of the Committee, Mr. Vilchez-Barros, who also serves as Chair of the Working Party, informed the Committee of the efforts being undertaken to promote UN/ECE commercial produce standards internationally to increase their use and avoid duplication which can occur when existing work is not known:

- Spain would provide unofficial translations of UN/ECE standards into Spanish to promote their dissemination in Latin America.
- The Working Party had been represented at an expert group meeting on agricultural standards organized by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA). For this meeting, ESCWA had translated 25 UN/ECE standards into Arabic and these were currently being examined by Governments for adoption as ESCWA standards.
- Contacts had also been established with the other United Nations regional commissions (for Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, and Asia and the Pacific).

36. The delegation of the European Community, speaking also on behalf of the 15 EU Member States, stated that the Community continued to place high priority on UN/ECE work on agricultural standards. The European Community further proposed that the Committee for Trade, Industry and Enterprise Development consider a possible transfer to the UN/ECE of the work being done by the OECD on interpretative brochures for UN/ECE standards. The delegation invited the secretariat to prepare a working document to define the modalities for undertaking this work, including a clear description of the costs (extra personnel, production of the brochures) and how these costs might be financed. This document should be prepared in time for discussion at the next session of the Specialized Section on Coordination of Standardization of Fresh Fruits and Vegetables from 25 to 28 October 1999 and for consequent

consideration by the Working Party, which will meet from 3 to 5 November 1999. The delegation of the United States supported this request. The Committee then approved the request for this study.

37. The Director of the Trade Division said that the secretariat would undertake the study requested but that it was of the highest importance to the UN/ECE not to jeopardize its excellent institutional relationship with the OECD. She then invited member States to keep the OECD and its secretariat informed of their requests to the UN/ECE, as well as of further developments. The delegation of the European Community noted that they had already, repeatedly, stated their opinion on this matter in OECD meetings and would continue to do so. The delegation of the United States said that they would keep the OECD secretariat informed on this issue.

FOURTH SESSION OF THE COMMITTEE FOR TRADE, INDUSTRY AND ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT

The following excerpt is taken from the report of the Committee (ECE/TRADE/262, paragraphs 32 to 39):

Item 6 - Agricultural quality standards

32. The secretariat introduced the activities of the Working Party on Standardization of Perishable Produce and Quality Development (WP.7) and gave an overview of the work carried out since the last session of the Committee. The Vice-Chairman of WP.7, Mr. David Priester, gave an in-depth explanation of the background and discussions in WP.7 on the elaboration of explanatory material.

33. At the third session of the Committee, the European Community had requested that the secretariat prepare a study on the modalities of preparing explanatory brochures for UN/ECE standards within the framework of WP.7 and its specialized sections. This request had been supported by the United States and agreed by the Committee.

34. The results of this study had shown that the work could be integrated without significantly increasing the number of meeting days but not without increasing existing resources. Specifically, an additional staff member would need to be employed. Because of the 0% growth budget of the UN/ECE this could only be achieved either through the creation of a trust fund with voluntary contributions from countries or through a reallocation of resources within the secretariat.

35. At its last session WP.7 decided to create an ad hoc group to look into this question, while stressing that there should be no duplication of work, i.e. WP.7 would be prepared to take on the preparation of explanatory material only if this work ceased to be done at the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

36. Both the delegation of the European Community and that of the United States indicated their interest in seeing this work transferred to the UN/ECE provided that work on explanatory material is discontinued at the OECD and the problem of funding the work at the UN/ECE is solved.

37. The delegation of the European Community stated that while it had taken note of the possibility of funding this activity *via* a trust fund, priority should be given to solving this problem by reallocating resources

within the Trade Division. The Committee then **requested** that the secretariat report on possibilities for doing this and provide feedback to the Working Party at its next session in November 2000.

38. The delegation of the Russian Federation said that it placed high priority on the work of WP.7 and its specialized sections, especially Meat and Seed Potatoes. It welcomed the fact that the latter group would discuss genetically modified organisms in the future but requested that work already done by other bodies be taken into account in order to avoid any duplication of work.

39. The Committee then **noted** documents TRADE/2000/5 and TRADE/WP.7/1999/7, which contain further details of the work done by WP.7 during this period.

FIFTY-FIFTH SESSION OF THE WORKING PARTY

The following excerpt is taken from the report of the Committee (TRADE/WP.7/1999/7, paragraphs 24 to 26):

Specialized Section on Standardization of Early and Ware Potatoes

Document: TRADE/WP.7/GE.5/1999/6

24. The secretariat gave a short summary of the work done at this year's session of the Specialized Section:

- UN/ECE standards FFV-30, 31 were reviewed; no amendments were deemed necessary;
- It was decided not to include a list of varieties in the standards;
- Delegations indicated the use of the UN/ECE standards in their national legislation;
- The definition of long varieties was discussed and proposals for an amelioration were invited;
- An indicative list of long varieties of irregular shape was established ("Stella", "Ratte", "Corne de Gate"). Responses from the trade will be reported at the next session;
- Proposals for the harmonization of the definition and marking of the cooking type were invited;
- Switzerland gave as practical demonstration of the method for the inspection of a sample;
- It was decided to await the publication of RUCIP 2000 before deciding whether to revise the UN/ECE General Conditions of Sale for Potatoes

25. The following items were placed on the agenda of the next session:

- Review of the UN/ECE standards FFV-30, 31
- Definition of cooking types and eventually a colour scheme for marking of cooking types on consumer packages
- Review of the definition for long varieties
- Review of reactions from the trade to the indicative list of long varieties of an irregular shape
- Each delegation was invited to provide their national legislation to the secretariat
- Review of RUCIP 2000 and a list of differences to the UN/ECE standards
- Information on the progress of the OECD explanatory brochure for Early and Ware potatoes
- Presentation by France on methods used for inspection and sampling
- Presentation by Belgium of charts used to indicate washability

26. The Working Party approved the report of the Specialized Section including the future work.