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ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

COMMITTEE ON TRADE

Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards

Sixty-second session
Geneva, 7 - 9 November 2006

REPORT ON ITS SIXTY-SECOND SESSION

Executive Summary

The Working Party took the following major decisions:

Fresh Fruit and Vegetables

Adopted/reconfirmed the standards for: Early and Ware Potatoes (FFV-52), Melons (FFV-23), Truffles (FFV-53), Bilberries and Blueberries (FFV-07).

Extended the trial period for one year for recommendations on: Table Grapes (FFV-19), Cherries (FFV-13), Peaches and Nectarines (FFV-26), Ceps (FFV-54).

Dry and Dried Produce

Adopted the new Standard Layout for UNECE Standards on Dry and Dried Produce to be tested on new standards and recommendations under trial.

Extended the trial period for one year for recommendations on: Inshell Hazelnuts (DDP-3), Inshell Almonds, Pistachio Kernels (DDP-10).

Suspended the work on the Standard for Dried Peppers.

Executive Summary (cont'd)

Seed Potatoes

Adopted the Standard for Seed Potatoes and its List of Diseases.

Meat

Adopted the standards for: Turkey, Ovine, Chicken, Porcine and Llama/Alpaca Meat.

Alignment of the conformity certificate with the UN Layout Key

Approved the revised Conformity Certificate.

Review of the work of the Working Party

Decided to draw up a questionnaire to monitor the practical use of UNECE standards.

Other business

Asked the Specialized Section on Meat to prepare a proposal on how to reactivate work on the Standard for Eggs.

INTRODUCTION

1. The meeting was chaired by Mrs. Viera Baricicova (Slovakia) and opened by Ms. Virginia Cram-Martos, Director of the UNECE Trade and Timber Division. She informed the delegates about the results of the UNECE reform. She then reported on the progress made in implementing the decision in the UNECE Reform Plan to strengthen the UNECE's work on agricultural quality standards and to initiate discussions on the concentration of the OECD and UNECE activities in this area within the UNECE. She also presented the UNECE capacity-building activities and introduced the results of the review of the work of the Working Party. The delegates discussed these issues under corresponding agenda items.

2. Representatives of the following UNECE member countries attended the meeting: Czech Republic, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Russian Federation, Slovakia, Spain, Switzerland, Turkey, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and United States of America.

3. The European Community (EC) was also represented.

4. The following States attended under Article 11: Australia, Morocco and South Africa.

5. The following specialized agencies/programmes participated in the session: Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Programme.

6. Representatives from the following intergovernmental organizations participated in the session: the OECD Scheme for the Application of International Standards for Fruit and Vegetables.

7. Representatives of the following non-governmental organizations participated in the session: GS1.

8. The delegations of Belgium, Bulgaria and the Netherlands could not attend the session and sent their apologies.

Item 1. Adoption of the agenda

Documentation: Annotated provisional agenda
ECE/TRADE/C/WP.7/2006/1

9. The delegations adopted the provisional agenda with agreed changes in the sequence of agenda items. The following documents were added to the agenda:

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|-------|--|
| INF.1 | Draft memorandum of understanding between OECD and UNECE on the cooperation for standard development and interpretation associated with fruit and vegetables international marketing standards |
| INF.2 | GS1: An Overview |
| INF.3 | Presentation of the Chair of the Specialized Section on Standardization of Meat |
| INF.4 | UNECE Standards on Meat: Proposed text for Annex II. Codification System |

The following documents were deleted from the provisional agenda:

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|---|--------------------------------|
| UNECE Standard for Seed Potatoes (Part 2) | ECE/TRADE/C/WP.7/2006/8/Add.1 |
| UNECE Standard for Turkey Meat (Parts 2 and 3) | ECE/TRADE/C/WP.7/2006/10/Add.1 |
| | ECE/TRADE/C/WP.7/2006/10/Add.2 |
| UNECE Standard for Bovine Meat (Parts 2 and 3) | ECE/TRADE/C/WP.7/2006/11/Add.1 |
| | ECE/TRADE/C/WP.7/2006/11/Add.2 |
| UNECE Standard for Ovine Meat (Parts 2 and 3) | ECE/TRADE/C/WP.7/2006/12/Add.1 |
| | ECE/TRADE/C/WP.7/2006/12/Add.2 |
| UNECE Standard for Chicken Meat (Parts 2 and 3) | ECE/TRADE/C/WP.7/2006/13/Add.1 |
| | ECE/TRADE/C/WP.7/2006/13/Add.2 |
| UNECE Standard for Porcine Meat (Parts 2 and 3) | ECE/TRADE/C/WP.7/2006/14/Add.1 |
| | ECE/TRADE/C/WP.7/2006/14/Add.2 |
| Explanatory brochure on plums (Part 2) | ECE/TRADE/C/WP.7/2006/16/Add.1 |
| Sales Packages | ECE/TRADE/C/WP.7/2006/18 |

Item 2. Matters of interest since the last session

Documentation:

- | | |
|---|---------------------------|
| Concentrating agricultural quality standards work:
draft transition plan | ECE/TRADE/C/2006/18/Add.1 |
| Geneva Protocol | TRADE/WP.7/2005/9/Add.1 |
| Strengthening the UNECE Committee on Trade | ECE/TRADE/C/2006/3 |
| Committee on Trade: Draft Terms of Reference | ECE/TRADE/C/2006/10 |

(a) Concentrating agricultural quality standards work in the UNECE

10. The secretariat informed delegations of the progress made both by itself and the Committee on Trade in implementing the decision to initiate consultations on the concentration of the agricultural quality standards activities of the UNECE and OECD within the UNECE. The UNECE secretariat, in consultations with interested parties, developed a draft transition plan. The plan was discussed at the sessions of Specialized Sections on Standardization of Fresh Fruit and Vegetables and of Dry and Dried Produce, and revised following those discussions. It was then approved by the Committee on Trade (ECE/C/TRADE/2006/18/Add.1) and sent to the OECD for consideration.

11. The OECD secretariat informed delegations that the draft plan would be discussed at the OECD Plenary Meeting of the Fruit and Vegetables Scheme on 30 November - 1 December 2006. The recommendations of the Plenary Meeting would then be submitted to the parent Committee for Agriculture for endorsement. The next meeting of the Committee would be held in May 2007. The recommendations of the Committee would then be submitted to the OECD Council for approval. During this process the OECD legal department would also review the document to ensure that OECD protocol is fully adhered to. At each stage of the process, all decisions are made on a consensual basis.

12. A proposal was put forward to set up a cooperation task force composed of national experts in their individual capacity plus representatives from the UNECE and OECD secretariats and the European Commission.

13. The Working Party elected the following persons in their capacity as individual experts to the Task Force on Cooperation with the OECD: Ms. Kristina Mattsson (Sweden), Mr. Ian Hewett (United Kingdom), Mr. Dorian Lafond (United States), Mrs. Viera Baricicova (Slovakia) and Mr. Denis De Froidmont (European Commission). Bearing in mind that the expert from European Commission might equally be appointed by the OECD Scheme, the Working Party invited the OECD Scheme to appoint another four individuals to the Task Force as experts. The UNECE and OECD secretariats were also invited to appoint a representative to this group, which will be serviced by the UNECE. This Task Force will look at ways to reinforce cooperation between the two organizations and, in the case of approval of the draft transition plan (ECE/TRADE/2006/18/Add.1) by the OECD, will assume the responsibilities of the Transition Task Force as described in that document.

(b) Other organizations

Documentation: INF.1

14. The representative of the Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Programme informed the Working Party on the work under the Programme since the last session, which included advancements on standards for tomatoes, table grapes and apples. The Codex Committee, at its meeting in Mexico City in September 2006, had agreed to retain the draft Codex Standard for Tomatoes, pending finalization on sizing provisions; to advance the draft Codex Standard for Table Grapes for adoption by the Codex Alimentarius Commission; and to return the proposed draft Codex Standard for Apples for redrafting and further consideration. Other important decisions were to advance the Guidelines for Quality Control of Fresh Fruits and Vegetables to

the Commission for preliminary adoption, to keep the Priority List for Standardization unchanged, with a request for proposed amendments, and to continue discussion of a Layout for Codex Standards for Fresh Fruits and Vegetables.

15. A proposal was made for the WP.7 Bureau, together with the secretariat, to identify documents from other organizations of potential interest to the users of UNECE standards, such as the Guidelines for Quality Control, and to provide links to these documents on the UNECE website.

16. The EC delegation informed the meeting that the EC standards for headed cabbage and melons had been amended (Commission regulations Nos. 634/2006 and 1016/2006). The EC standard for headed cabbage had been revised in line with the UNECE standard and the amendment to the EC standard for melons had introduced a labeling requirement for the commercial type based on the commercial types recently adopted in the OECD brochure.

17. In addition to the approval already granted to India, Israel, Morocco, New Zealand, South Africa and Switzerland, the Commission regulations 430/2006 and 431/2006 had approved the recognition of checks for conformity with marketing standards for fresh fruit and vegetables carried out in Kenya and Senegal. A proposal to grant Turkey the same recognition is currently being finalized.

18. A representative of the OECD presented the work of his organization since the last session. The last Plenary Meeting of the OECD Scheme had adopted an explanatory brochure on table grapes to be published soon, and a brochure on commercial types of melons has been published in French and English and can be downloaded free of charge from the OECD Fruit and Vegetables website (www.oecd.org/agr/fv). The Plenary Meeting had agreed to offer all explanatory brochures (text and photographs) on the website free of charge. The Plenary Meeting had also adopted new guidelines, downloadable from the Scheme website, on objective tests for determining the quality of fruit and vegetables and dry and dried produce.

19. A revised OECD Council Decision C(99)10/FINAL has been adopted. The new document is C(2006)95 and is available on the website. This document includes, as annex II, the Operating rules for the conformity checks of produce exported under the Scheme.

Item 3. Specialized Section on Standardization of Fresh Fruit and Vegetables

Documentation:

Report of the fifty-second session ECE/TRADE/C/WP.7/GE.1/2006/2

20. The Chairperson of the Specialized Section informed the Working Party of the outcome of the fifty-second session of the Specialized Section. The Working Party was invited to take decisions on the standards and recommendations proposed for adoption.

(a) Texts recommended for adoption as revised/new UNECE standards

Documentation:

Early and Ware Potatoes	ECE/TRADE/C/WP.7/2006/2
Melons	ECE/TRADE/C/WP.7/2006/3
Truffles (new standard)	TRADE/WP.7/GE.1/2004/25/Add.8

21. The Working Party adopted the Standard on Early and Ware Potatoes (FFV-52).
22. The Working Party adopted the Standard for Melons (FFV-23). The Working Party asked the secretariat to include in it a reference to the OECD brochure on commercial types of melons and to indicate the website address from which the electronic version of this brochure can be downloaded.
23. The Working Party adopted the new Standard for Fresh Truffles (FFV-53).

(b) Texts recommended for adoption as UNECE recommendations

Documentation:

Table Grapes	ECE/TRADE/C/WP.7/2006/4
Bilberries and Blueberries	TRADE/WP.7/GE.1/2004/25/Add.5
Cherries	ECE/TRADE/C/WP.7/2006/5
Peaches and Nectarines	ECE/TRADE/C/WP.7/2006/6
Ceps	ECE/TRADE/C/WP.7/2006/7

24. The Working Party adopted for Table Grapes the section on minimum maturity requirements as a UNECE recommendation on trial until 2007 to be further discussed at the next session of Specialized Section on Fresh Fruit and Vegetables. Subject to inputs from the OECD Scheme and Codex Alimentarius, other parts of the standard may also be revisited. The Working Party asked the secretariat to delete the reference to *Fendant* (name of a wine in Switzerland made from *Chasselas* grapes) from the list of varieties before putting the standard on the website.
25. The Working Party reconfirmed the text for Bilberries and Blueberries (FFV-07) as a UNECE standard. The Specialized Section considered the text of the standard and did not introduce any changes to it.
26. The Working Party adopted in the Standard for Cherries the recommendation to delete the paragraph “The cherries must be carefully picked” and keep it on trial until 2007.
27. The Working Party decided to return the text for Peaches and Nectarines (FFV-26) to the Specialized Section for further work and asked the secretariat to withdraw this document from the website. It was unclear which text to adopt because the document submitted contained both working material and recommendations, and also because the delegations interpreted differently the content of the fifty-second session of the Specialized Session. The Working Party extended the trial period of the existing recommendation (TRADE/WP.7/GE.1/2004/25/Add.4) through 2007.

28. The Working Party adopted the text for Ceps as a UNECE recommendation on trial until 2007.

Item 4. Specialized Section on Standardization of Dry and Dried Produce

Documentation: Report of the fifty-third session
ECE/TRADE/C/WP.7/GE.2/2006/10

29. The secretariat informed the Working Party of the outcome of the fifty-third session of the Specialized Section.

(a) Standard Layout for UNECE Standards on Dry and Dried Produce

Documentation: Standard Layout for UNECE Standards on Dry and Dried Produce
ECE/TRADE/C/WP.7/GE.2/2006/10/Add.1

30. The Working Party took note of the revised Standard Layout and agreed to the proposal of the Specialized Section to test it on a number of new standards and recommendations under trial. The Layout may be revised following the outcome of these tests.

(b) Texts recommended for adoption as UNECE recommendations

Documentation:
UNECE Standard for Inshell Hazelnuts ECE/TRADE/C/WP.7/GE.2/2006/10/Add.4
UNECE Standard for Inshell Almonds ECE/TRADE/C/WP.7/GE.2/2006/10/Add.3
UNECE Standard for Pistachio Kernels TRADE/WP.7/GE.2/2005/19/Add.2

31. The Working Party adopted the texts for Inshell Hazelnuts, Inshell Almonds, and Pistachio Kernels and Peeled Pistachio Kernels as UNECE recommendations on trial until 2007.

32. The Working Party agreed to the proposal of the Specialized Section to suspend the work on the UNECE Standard for Dried Peppers because of the insignificant volumes of international trade in this product.

Item 5. Specialized Section on Standardization of Seed Potatoes

Documentation:
Report of the thirty-sixth session ECE/TRADE/WP.7/GE.6/2006/13
Seed Potatoes Standard ECE/TRADE/C/WP.7/2006/8
Seed Potatoes List of Diseases ECE/TRADE/C/WP.7/2006/9

33. The Chairperson of the Specialized Section informed the Working Party on the outcome of the thirty-sixth session of the Specialized Section and on the meetings of the Extended Bureau held in 2006. Some delegations expressed concern regarding the work on dispute settlements initiated by the Specialized Section. They felt that this work should only be to provide voluntary guidelines for disputes related to seed potatoes for use by the industry or other organizations (i.e. not to develop binding instruments or become involved in actual dispute settlement). The Section also needed to ensure that it took into account existing industry procedures for dispute settlement as well as related work by other international organizations.

(a) Text recommended for adoption as revised UNECE standard

34. The Working Party adopted the text for Seed Potatoes and its List of Diseases as a revised UNECE Standard for Seed Potatoes.

Item 6. Specialized Section on Standardization of MeatDocumentation:

Report of the fifteenth session	ECE/TRADE/WP.7/GE.11/2006/9
GS1: An Overview.	INF.2
Presentation of the Chair of the Specialized Section on Standardization of Meat	INF.3
UNECE Standards on Meat: Proposed text for Annex II. Codification System	INF.4

35. The Chairperson of the Specialized Section presented the work of the Section since the last session. Major advancements in the past year had been revised ovine and chicken standards and the first standards for turkey, porcine and alpaca/llama meat. A key project for 2007 will be the revision of the 2004 Bovine Standard. The Working Party was informed about the outcome of the meeting of rapporteurs on the Standard on Fancy Meats held in Paris on 30 and 31 October 2006. A meeting of the rapporteurs on the Caprine (Goat) Standard is planned for the summer 2007. An important focus of future work would be a codification system to fit in with the growing use of e-commerce in the sector.

36. The UNECE meat standards are descriptions of cuts and production methods, which are intended to give buyers and sellers a common definition of the products being traded. They also provide a format for referencing the use of national and other quality systems. Some countries have adopted UNECE meat standards as their national standards or have used them as the basis of regulations, but the standards are intended to be voluntary and not mandatory.

37. The delegation of the Russian Federation provided information on the work done in Russia on the development of meat standards and on drawing up related technical regulations. Russia would be interested in learning more about similar work done in other countries and asked the secretariat to help obtain this information. The secretariat was also requested to check the translation of the meat standards with Russian experts before submitting the standards for publication.

38. The representative of GS1 gave an overview of how GS1 coding systems could be used by the Working Party's Specialized Sections. For example, GS1 was working to incorporate the UNECE Meat Carcasses and Cuts Classification into the new GS1 coding system. Information on the identity of packers and dispatchers for fruits, vegetables and dry and dried produce could also be incorporated into the GS1 code.

(a) Text recommended for adoption as new UNECE StandardDocumentation:

UNECE Standard for Turkey Meat	ECE/TRADE/C/WP.7/2006/10
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39. The Working Party adopted the text for Turkey Meat as a new UNECE Standard.

(b) Texts recommended for adoption as revised UNECE StandardsDocumentation:

UNECE Standard for Bovine Meat	ECE/TRADE/C/WP.7/2006/11
UNECE Standard for Ovine Meat	ECE/TRADE/C/WP.7/2006/12
UNECE Standard for Chicken Meat	ECE/TRADE/C/WP.7/2006/13
UNECE Standard for Porcine Meat	ECE/TRADE/C/WP.7/2006/14
UNECE Standard for Llama/Alpaca Meat	ECE/TRADE/C/WP.7/2006/15

40. The Working Party adopted the texts for bovine, ovine, porcine and chicken meat as revised UNECE standards. The Standard on Alpaca/Llama meat had already been approved at the 2004 session of the Working Party.

Item 7. PublicationsDocumentation:

Explanatory brochure on Plums	ECE/TRADE/C/WP.7/2006/16
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(a) Explanatory brochure on plums

41. The Working Party was informed of the OECD explanatory brochure on plums being translated into Russian by the UNECE. Brochures in Russian are helpful for training courses and capacity-building activities in the countries of Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia. The delegates stressed the importance of checking the quality of translation with national experts.

Item 8. General questions concerning the work of WP.7 and its specialized sections**(a) Alignment of the conformity certificate with the United Nations Layout Key**Documentation:

Conformity Certificate	ECE/TRADE/C/WP.7/2006/17
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42. The Working Group approved the Conformity Certificate submitted by the Specialized Section on Fresh Fruit and Vegetables. The Certificate has been aligned with the UN Layout Key and other UNECE trade facilitation recommendations.

(b) Sales Packages

43. This item was withdrawn from the agenda. The discussion on sales packages will continue in the Specialized Section on Fresh Fruit and Vegetables.

(c) Review of the work of the Working PartyDocumentation:

Review of the work of the Working Party	ECE/TRADE/C/WP.7/2006/19
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44. The delegates took note of the results of the survey of the work of the Working Party and discussed how to keep track of progress in the implementation of standards at the national level. The Working Party asked the secretariat to draw up, in consultation with the participants in WP.7

meetings, a draft list of questions to send out to countries every two years to collect information on the practical use of UNECE standards, no matter if they are mandatory or voluntary. This list of questions should be discussed by every specialized section and then submitted to the Working Party for approval.

45. To promote the work on standards, the Working Party requested the Chairpersons of the Specialized Sections to prepare PowerPoint presentations for reporting on their activities to the Working Party. These presentations could then be published and regularly updated on the UNECE website and used by others for promoting their work.

Item 9. Capacity-building activities

46. The secretariat and delegates provided information on the following capacity-building activities that either have already taken place in or are planned for 2006-2007:

- A Joint Slovakia/OECD/UNECE International Training Course, 19-21 June 2006, Mojmírovce, Slovakia.
- A Joint OECD/UNECE/EC Workshop on Fruit and Vegetables Standards, 3-7 July 2006, Tbilisi, Georgia.
- A Training Course on Harmonizing Interpretation of Standards, 13-15 September 2006, Guildford, United Kingdom.
- A Joint Slovakia/OECD/EC/UNECE International Training Course, December 2006, Chisinau, Moldova.
- The 26th International Meeting on Quality Control of Fruit and Vegetables, 5-7 March 2007, Bonn, Germany.
- The UNECE secretariat received two requests to organize workshops on fruit, vegetables and meat standards in the south of Italy (Ragusa and Calabria) in 2007.
- Seminar on meat standards, June 2007, Mongolia.
- Workshop on seed potatoes back-to-back with Russia Potato Congress, Moscow, August 2007.

Item 10. Other business

47. To initiate work on an explanatory brochure for inshell walnuts and walnut kernels, the Working Party decided to offer to undertake this work jointly with the OECD Scheme and requested the UNECE secretariat to convey this offer to the Plenary Meeting of the Scheme to be held on 30 November - 1 December 2006. Subject to the acceptance of this offer by the OECD, the project should start without delay and draw on the work done in the United States.

48. The Working Party asked the secretariat not to disseminate the Colour Chart for Walnut Kernels and to withdraw it from sales because of the inadequate quality of the pictures. The Colour Chart should be merged with the explanatory brochure.

49. Several countries expressed their interest in revising the standard for eggs. The Working Party requested the Specialized Section on Meat to discuss this at its next session and to submit its proposals to the 2007 session of the Working Party. One suggestion was to merge the dormant Specialized Section on Eggs and Egg Products with the Specialized Section on Meat to form a new Specialized Section on Animal Products.

50. In view of the planned work on the OECD brochures for apples, peppers and cucumbers, the Working Party felt that the English and French texts of the corresponding UNECE standards should be checked for consistency. Once the decision is made by the OECD Scheme to start work on the above brochures, the UNECE secretariat will be informed about the need of putting the three standards on the agenda for the next session of the Specialized Section on Fresh Fruit and Vegetables.

Item 11. Programme of work

51. The Working Party took note of the 2007 provisional calendar of meetings of the Specialized Sections and the Working Party. It also requested the UNECE secretariat to propose, on its behalf, to the OECD Scheme that the next meeting of the Working Party in the autumn of 2007 be a joint WP.7/OECD Scheme meeting, in Geneva.

Meeting	Session	Location	Dates
Specialized Section on Standardization of Fresh Fruit and Vegetables (GE.1)	53	Geneva	21 - 25 May ¹
Specialized Section on Standardization of Dry and Dried Produce (GE.2)	54	Geneva	25 - 29 June ²
Specialized Section on Standardization of Seed Potatoes (GE.6)	37	Geneva	19 - 21 March
Specialized Section on Standardization of Meat (GE.11)	16	Geneva	30 April - 3 May
Proposed joint Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards (WP.7) and OECD Scheme meeting	63	Geneva	5 - 9 November ³

¹ Working groups will have the opportunity to meet on 21 May 2007.

² Working groups will have the opportunity to meet on 25 June 2007.

³ Working groups will have the opportunity to meet on 5 November 2007.

Item 12. Election of officers

52. The Working Party elected Mrs. Viera Baricicova (Slovakia) as Chairperson and Ms. Niina Kauhajärvi (Finland) as Vice-Chairperson.

Item 13. Adoption of the report

53. The Working Party adopted its report.

The following addendum is published separately:

ECE/TRADE/C/WP.7/2006/20/Add.1 UNECE Standards on Meat. Annex II. Codification System.