



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-ninth session

Geneva, 9-11 June 2021

Report of the sixty-ninth session of the Specialized Section on Standardization of Fresh Fruit and Vegetables**I. Introduction**

1. Ms. Ulrike Bickelmann (Germany) chaired the online session of the Specialized Section on Standardization of Fresh Fruit and Vegetables. She expressed her appreciation for securing interpretation services during part of the session, highlighting that it would facilitate the discussion of many items on the agenda. The Chair announced that she will step down from her responsibilities as of this year and invited nominations from the delegates.
2. The Deputy Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), Mr. Dmitry Mariyasin, opened the session by welcoming the delegates to the sixty-ninth session of the Specialized Section being held in an online and hybrid format. He highlighted the importance of the fresh fruit and vegetables standardization agenda at the UNECE and its role in sustainable food systems. He also mentioned the ongoing preparations for the first-ever United Nations Food Systems Summit as well as UNECE's contribution to the summit, including through the Issue Based Coalition on Sustainable Food Systems.
3. He expressed his appreciation to the delegates for their work and support in these challenging times, highlighting the successfully held 2020 session and follow-up meetings, as well as progress made despite the COVID-19 crisis. Finally, he emphasized UNECE's strong commitment to combatting food loss and waste, highlighting the benefits of the recently launched online food loss management system FeedUP@UN and encouraging member States to embrace that solution as a chance to re-imagine our food systems.

II. Attendance

4. Representatives of the following countries attended the meeting: Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, India, Ireland, Italy, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Morocco, Netherlands, Poland, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Tajikistan, Turkey, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Uzbekistan.
5. The European Commission was also represented.

6. A representative of the following intergovernmental organization participated in the session: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Scheme for the Application of International Standards for Fruit and Vegetables.

7. Representatives from the following private sector organizations were present at the invitation of the secretariat: Driscoll's Europe, Embrapa Brazil, Eucofel, Freshfel Europe, Fruit Vegetables Europe, Interfel France.

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 Director of the Economic Cooperation and Trade Division of UNECE, Ms. Elisabeth Tuerk, welcomed the delegates. She gave an overview of relevant inter-governmental meetings held in 2020, such as the informal consultations of the Steering Committee on Trade Capacity and Standards held in June 2020 and the informal session of the Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards (WP.7) held in November 2020. She noted that the next session of the Steering Committee on Trade Capacity and Standards would be held in a hybrid format on 21-22 June 2021.

10. She further shared that the Working Party adopted a new programme of work in an inter-sessional approval procedure. That programme of work focused around market transparency, food security and enhanced collaboration and highlighted future work on emerging topics such as sustainable food systems, circular economy as well as on the nexus of sustainable use of natural resources and measures to mitigate the negative effects of climate change.

11. She provided an overview of relevant workstreams and deliverables, including the recent launch of a blockchain enhanced FeedUP@UN tool and its relevance to implementation of United Nations Sustainable Development Goals 2, 8, 11 and 12. She invited delegations to inform the secretariat of any interest to pilot the tool on the national or regional level. In conclusion, she provided two examples of global and regional events, such as the UNECE-FAO virtual Roundtable entitled "Food for Partnerships - Sustainable, Resilient and Climate-proof Food Supply Chains", held in November 2020 and the FAO's launch of the regional flagship publication in May 2021, held with UNECE's contribution.

12. In conclusion, she drew attention to the sixty-ninth session of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, which was held on 20-21 April 2021 and focused around "Promoting circular economy and sustainable use of natural resources in the UNECE region". She gave an overview of the decisions (https://unece.org/sites/default/files/2021-03/E_ECE_1500-2103148E.pdf), while flagging the high-level statement calling for strengthening work on the circular economy in the UNECE region and inviting its subsidiary bodies to consider embedding it into their scope of work (https://unece.org/sites/default/files/2021-03/E_ECE_1497-2102163E.pdf).

(b) Recent developments in other organizations

13. The Specialized Section took note of the update provided by the representative of the OECD, including the appointment of a new Secretary-General, pending applications from Croatia and Slovenia to join the OECD Scheme, an update on explanatory brochures as well as a webinar series and new areas of work. A detailed update is available on the UNECE web site at: <https://unece.org/info/Trade/WP.7-Meetings/events/351164>.

14. The Specialized Section took note of the update provided by the representative of the Central Asian Working Group (CAWG), including an upcoming meeting on commercial standards for fresh fruit and vegetables and dry and dried produce.

15. The Specialized Section took note of the update from the European Union (EU), in particular, the ongoing adaptation of the EU marketing standards to the changes made in recent years to the corresponding UNECE standards that will soon be published in an EU regulation.

V. Circular economy - transitioning to circularity in food trade

16. The UNECE secretariat reported on the outcome of the 69th session of the Commission held in April 2021 with an overarching theme of circular economy. Session deliberations resulted in issuance of a high-level statement inviting all committees and subsidiary bodies to review their work for an enhanced circular economy focus within their existing mandates, budgets and programmes of work. The secretariat invited member States to propose any ideas on potential contributions to the topic with the further discussion envisaged at the upcoming WP.7 session in November 2021.

17. The Specialized Section noted that while the topic of the circular economy is very important, it is beyond the Specialized Section's core mandate and proposed to discuss this item further at the Working Party session.

VI. Sustainable food systems and the 2021 United Nations Food Systems Summit

18. The secretariat reported on the upcoming United Nations Food Systems Summit that would take place in September 2021, highlighting it as an opportunity to rethink our food systems and emphasizing the planned launch of new actions reflecting a change in the way food is produced and consumed. All United Nations bodies were invited to contribute to the Summit and UNECE would contribute at the Executive Secretary level and with support of WP.7.

19. The secretariat invited contribution, ideas and support from the Specialized Section.

VII. Micro-, small- and medium-sized enterprises and agricultural quality standards for resilient supply chains

20. The secretariat reported on recent activities related to national-level debates on food and nutrition. Considering the important role of micro-, small- and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) sustainable trade, the secretariat hopes to explore possibilities to integrate MSMEs into its work. The secretariat invited ideas and suggestions from the Specialized Section.

21. The secretariat also reported on the e-learning course on commercial quality standards and enquired of any interest from countries to participate in the peer review. The Specialized Section requested the secretariat to circulate the e-learning modules to the entire group for review and feedback. The delegations of Belgium, Finland, Germany, and Spain undertook to submit a report (which guarantees the minimum of four countries to provide feedback).

VIII. Nexus of sustainable use of natural resources

22. The secretariat informed the Specialized Section about the enhanced cooperation at UNECE and its four nexuses. Following the decision of the 69th session of the Commission, the Executive Secretary is considering the revision of the current arrangement of nexuses and re-organizing them around the circular economy topic. The Specialized Section would be informed accordingly.

IX. Resilient food supply chains and post-COVID recovery

23. The Specialized Section agreed that considering the ongoing COVID-19 crisis, the food supply chains and post-COVID recovery discussion should be postponed to the Working Party session.

X. Analysis of the impact of agricultural quality standards on the trade of fruit and vegetables

24. The secretariat informed the Specialized Section of the expressed interest to analyse the impact of agricultural quality standards on the trade of fruit and vegetables. Some concerns were raised in regard to potential challenges with collecting necessary data for measuring that impact. A few suggestions were provided by delegations, such as measuring the number of inspections per commodity, the volume of imported and inspected produce or developing relevant checklists.

25. The OECD expressed interest in collaborating with UNECE and interested countries to implement the study. The Specialized Section welcomed this cooperation and invited interested delegations to contribute to the analysis.

XI. Sustainable Development Goal 12 and sustainable practices: Food loss and food waste prevention related to standards

26. The project leader of FeedUP@UN and former Secretary to WP.7 and its Specialized Sections, Ms. Liliana Annovazzi-Jakab, reported on project-related activities. She gave an overview of the FeedUP@UN activities, including in preparation for the United Nations Food Systems Summit. She encouraged the delegations to explore interest in piloting the tool on the national level and inform the secretariat accordingly. She further reported on the background paper on “Certification related to food loss and waste” (https://unece.org/sites/default/files/2021-06/GE1_2021_21E.pdf) and invited feedback from the Specialized Section on the criteria for integrating another layer or data collection in the existing online system.

27. She gave an update on the Code of Good Practice with expected release date in September 2021 and informed the Specialized Section about four completed food loss and quality assessments, with one more expected in the future. She further informed delegates about two workshops planned in Central Asia for September 2021 and a concluding workshop planned to be convened online in November 2021.

28. The Specialized Section took note of the updates and requested the secretariat to organize an online session on certification related to food loss in September 2021, where the comments to the background paper on certification would be discussed. Any proposals from the Specialized Section on implementing the food loss and waste certification and integrating it into the FeedUP@UN tool would be discussed at that session.

29. The Specialized Section congratulated Ms. Annovazzi-Jakab warmly on her new position with another part of UNECE and thanked her for her excellent support over so many years. Her prudence in the established work on standards, her openness to new tasks, her prudent management of the projects for training in countries and regions – in short, her tireless, congenial commitment in the service of marketing standards and thus of the countries, industry and consumers is of inestimable value to the Specialized Section. The Specialized Section is now looking forward to continued collaboration on FeedUP@UN, which was welcomed by the Director of the ECTD.

XII. Electronic quality certificates for fresh fruit and vegetables

30. The secretariat of the United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business (UN/CEFACT) updated the Specialized Section on the electronic quality

certificates, noting that the funding was secured for a small project funded by the United Nations Development Account. The project would focus on developing a general process description, documenting the business processes when issuing a quality certificate and would be implemented jointly with the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) Automated System for Customs Data (ASYCUDA) and the German Federal Office for Agriculture and Food.

31. The output of the project would be further integrated into electronic software and could also be used for developing national systems independently by countries. The secretariat noted that the draft process description will be circulated to the Specialized Section for feedback, once available. The secretariat also reported that no requests to change the e-quality standard were received.

32. In addition, the UN/CEFACT secretariat provided an update on the use of electronic Certificates (eCERT), noting the continued implementation and use of the eCERT standard to exchange electronic certificates. In conclusion, the secretariat called on the Specialized Section to make a recommendation to parties to use this standard for electronic exchange of information and certificates.

33. The Specialized Section agreed to recommend using the UN/e-quality standard for cross-border exchange and publish it on the Agricultural Quality Standards website as well as report accordingly to the 2021 session of the WP.7. The secretariat would provide an accompanying text for publishing the standard on the website.

XIII. Capacity-building and promotional activities

34. The delegation of Germany reported on the 33rd International Meeting on Quality Control for Fresh Fruit and Vegetables held online in March 2021 which gathered a record number of 450 participants. The meeting proceedings would be available shortly on the website (www.ble.de/iat-en). The next meeting on quality control would take place 14-18 March 2023.

35. The CAWG reported on recently developed explanatory posters for fresh fruit and vegetables, which will be circulated for review and feedback to the Specialized Section. Posters will be translated into English and shared with the secretariat for circulation.

36. The OECD reported on the upcoming harmonization meeting in Slovakia on 16-17 September in which OECD will take part. OECD is organizing webinar series, starting on 13 September 2021 with participation of Freshfel and FAO. More information would be shared at a later stage.

XIV. Development of new standards

Pomegranates

37. The Specialized Section reviewed the proposal introduced by the delegation of Spain to develop a UNECE standard for pomegranates based on the existing Codex standard. The delegate pointed to the absence of a legal basis for labelling class and size in pomegranates, as there is currently no UNECE standard. To avoid technical barriers to trade Spain suggested developing a standard similar to the Codex standard and align it with UNECE Standard Layout for Fresh Fruits and Vegetables.

38. Some countries initially opposed developing a new standard in addition to the well-established Codex standard, to avoid duplication of work, additional costs, and potential confusion for the traders. Some EU countries clarified that classifying produce covered by the EU general marketing standard is accepted provided the holder is able to show that the products are in conformity with any applicable standard adopted by UNECE. Thus, the introduction of a UNECE standard for pomegranates would be beneficial for the traders. One of the delegations said the process for adopting a Codex standard by UNECE would need to be explored.

39. Considering that an UNECE standard would be favourable in EU countries, a compromise was reached to develop a UNECE standard, as that would help many countries to facilitate trade by using internationally agreed classification. The United States and Sweden initially indicated their reservation and objection to duplication but offered a compromise and agreed to development of a standard, considering the expressed need and support indicated by a number of delegations.

40. The Specialized Section decided to develop a UNECE standard for pomegranates based on the existing Codex standard. Spain will be the Rapporteur and circulate a draft for consultation (in July-August 2021) to the Specialized Section. If a decision is taken, the draft will be submitted to the Working Party for adoption in November 2021. Otherwise, this item will be placed on the 2022 Specialized Section agenda.

XV. Revision of standards

(a) Revisions of standards (further discussion of 2020 proposals)

41. The Specialized Section was informed that all final decisions on amendments to the standards under review would be taken in a 1-month inter-sessional approval procedure following the six-week consultation period. All changes and options proposed during the current session are included in the post-session documents available on the UNECE web site at: <https://unece.org/info/Trade/WP.7-Meetings/events/351164>.

42. During the consultation period, comments should be sent to the secretariat prior to the 19 August deadline to allow for circulation and for negotiation with other delegations. As customary, silence or the absence of comments means agreement. In case of incoming comments, the Specialized Section asked the secretariat to organize a follow-up online session at the end of the six-week consultation period. This should allow working on compromises. Should consensus be reached during the consultation period or at the online session, the document will be submitted to the inter-sessional approval process. If then approved, the drafts would be submitted to the November 2021 session of the Working Party for adoption. Otherwise, the proposals would be placed on the 2022 agenda of the Specialized Section.

Carrots

43. The Specialized Section discussed the proposals of the German delegation which were included in the 2020 post-session document without a consensus reached during the consultation period.

44. The proposal in the minimum requirements was to include provisions on the freshness of leaves of carrots presented with foliage and the possibility to trim the foliage within limits allowed. In addition, Germany proposed amendments to Class I and II reflecting discoloration of foliage or damage caused by disease. While a majority of countries agreed on adding a bullet point on discoloration of foliage, the addition of damage caused by disease was not supported. The Specialized Section noted that an illustrative interpretation on limits allowed for trimming and discoloration in an updated OECD brochure would facilitate the application of these new provisions.

45. The Specialized Section decided to amend the minimum requirements by adding a provision on freshness of leaves and foliage trimming, discoloration in Classes I and II as well as deleting specific reference to leaves in Extra Class and Class I.

Beans/Peas

46. The Specialized Section reviewed Germany's proposal to amend the standard for beans, on which no consensus was reached during the consultation period following the 2020

session. Delegations were invited to agree on one of the options below which would impact either the standard for beans or peas:

Option 1: Approval of the proposed inclusion of the trimming provision of needle beans under the Minimum requirement “intact” (i.e. harmonization with the same provision already included in the standard for peas (sugar snap peas and mange-tout peas)).

Option 2: Non-inclusion of the new provision in the standard for beans (needle beans) and deletion of the trimming provision under the Minimum requirement “intact” in the standard for peas (sugar snap peas and mange-tout peas).

47. The latter explained that needle beans were usually presented with ends trimmed, similar to mange-tout peas and sugar snap peas whose trimming was included in the minimum requirement “intact” in the standard for peas. While many delegations expressed support to the second option, others raised questions as to a possible shorter shelf life caused by the trimming while suggesting to also remove the trimming provision for sugar snap peas and mange-tout peas in the standard for peas.

48. The Specialized Section agreed on amending the standard for peas by deletion of the trimming provision under the minimum requirement “intact” in the standard for peas (sugar snap peas and mange-tout peas) and non-inclusion of the new provision in the standard for beans (needle beans). It decided to forward the text of the revised standards to the Working Party for approval.

Strawberries

49. The Specialized Section reviewed a proposal by the delegation of Germany to amend the standard for strawberries in order to allow 100% of strawberries with dried calyx in Class II or within the 10% tolerance in Class I, provided the fruit is fresh and sound.

50. Some producing countries expressed concern that a dried calyx is often accompanied by other issues, making the produce unsuitable for consumption. The importing countries expressed their concern with a potential increase in food waste when a fresh and intact fruit must be rejected due to a dried calyx and subsequent non-compliance with the existing standard. It was stressed that changing geo-climatic conditions and new strawberry varieties could potentially lead to increasing cases of a dried calyx, which should not exclude a product from Class II or even Class I. The delegation of the Netherlands also asked whether the minimum requirement of a green calyx could be considered by other countries, to allow inclusion of varieties with red discoloration of the calyx.

51. The post-session document will reflect the proposals on removing “green” from minimum requirement provisions for the calyx and on the allowance for a dry calyx but fresh fruit in Classes I and II. Delegations will have time to consult their industries during the consultation period.

(b) Revisions (new proposals)

Berries

52. The delegation of Sweden introduced its proposal to exempt cloudbberries and wild blueberries (*Vaccinium myrtillus* L, bilberries in the English version of the current standard) from the “intact” provision in the minimum requirements and lower the provisions for Class I to allow for some slight leakage of juice. After careful consideration of the proposal, the Specialized Section requested Sweden to reconsider lowering the minimum requirements and thus the provisions in the Extra Class. The delegate of Spain requested the addition of the Latin names to this proposal and informed the Specialized Section it would like to consult the industry.

53. The Specialized Section agreed on removing the proposed footnote on intactness from the minimum requirements while discussing the allowance for slight/some leakage of juice.

A compromise was reached on a footnote to Class I allowing for more leakage of juice in cloudbberries and wild blueberries. The Specialized Section took note of the OECD brochure on berry fruit that is currently in production. In that brochure the photo on leakage allowed in Class I was not ideal and a Class II photo was missing. Thus, the Specialized Section decided that the OECD Scheme should be contacted to allow for further consultation on juice leakage in berry fruit – especially cloudbberries and bilberries. If the decision for appropriate photos showed that an amendment of the standard would be needed at UNECE, those requests would be put on the agenda of next year's session.

54. The Specialized Section was informed about a request received by the secretariat from a private-sector company (Driscoll's) to increase tolerances for decay in Class I in the standard for berries. If interested, countries were invited to submit written proposals in this regard for the 2022 session.

Fresh figs

55. The delegation of Sweden introduced a proposal to amend the provisions concerning marking requirements for fresh figs and proposing that for the commercial specifications, the marking of number of fruit be made optional. Current labelling requirements state that both the size and the number of fruit must be indicated on the package.

56. Sweden expressed concern that failure to indicate one of these specifications may result in relabelling (and, consequently, loss of shelf life), returns or, in the worst-case scenario, rejection. Considering that in many other standards indicating number of fruit is optional, it was proposed to amend the standard by adding "optional" to the "number of fruit". One of the producing countries confirmed that buyers want to see class, weight and number of fruit, and are less concerned about the minimum and maximum diameters.

57. The delegation of United States recommended that the sizing amendments should also provide for fruit that is sized by count and offered to submit the proposed changes to the Sizing provision in this regard.

58. In order to increase flexibility, the Specialized Section agreed to combine two indents to state "Size, expressed as minimum and maximum diameters or Number of fruit, without stating "optional". The Specialized Section agreed on the proposed amendments to the fresh fig standard. It decided to forward the text of the revised standard to the Working Party for approval.

Carrots

59. The Specialized Section reviewed the proposals from the delegation of Sweden related to the minimum requirements and classification under Class II. Under minimum requirements Sweden proposed that the indent "not forked, free of secondary roots" be split in two different requirements, considering that these are separate and independent characteristics. Furthermore, Sweden proposed to remove the requirement that carrots "must be sufficiently dried after washing", to better reflect the condition of the roots at packing.

60. For Class II, Sweden proposed to add forked carrots and carrots with some secondary roots, to prevent food loss. With regard to adding forked carrots in Class II, there were several opinions voiced by the delegations, including one specifying doubles or increasing the tolerance from 10 to 20%. This discussion will be continued after the decision is made on the Standard Layout amendments. After careful consideration and a reservation from Germany, the Specialized Section agreed to adding "some secondary roots" to the list of defects, provided that OECD illustrates that in its brochures accordingly.

61. The Specialized Section agreed to add a provisional new indent on "one fork, two tips" in the list of defects allowed in Class II, to be reviewed again, once the decision is taken on a potential increase of tolerance from 10% to 20% in the Standard Layout. The Specialized Section decided to add a new indent on secondary roots in Class II and to remove the text referring to the condition of carrots after washing in minimum requirements.

Broccoli

62. Sweden introduced the proposal for the broccoli standard to amend minimum requirement provisions concerning discoloration of hollow stems, suggesting that oxidation may happen due to certain climatic conditions and does not necessarily affect the edibility of the crown.

63. While some delegations expressed their support, others proposed specifying that discoloration is not caused by diseases and setting the limit on degree of discoloration. Some delegations proposed consulting with OECD to review a possible degree or type of discoloration and review the proposed amendment.

64. The Specialized Section decided to consult OECD for a selection of photos illustrating acceptable discoloration and review a new proposal on discoloration of hollow stems at the 2022 session.

Chinese cabbage

65. Sweden introduced a proposal for the Chinese cabbage standard to amend the requirements in Class I by removing the requirement “well formed” to align it with further text in the standard, stating that a slight defect in shape is allowed.

66. Germany supported the proposal and further proposed to remove the provision for “free from freezing damage” in minimum requirements, considering that it is already covered by the ‘sound’ requirement.

67. The Specialized Section decided to amend the standard in line with both proposals. It decided to forward the text of the revised standard to the Working Party for approval.

Cucumbers

68. The delegation of Germany introduced a proposal to revise the standard for cucumbers to clarify the situation for cucumbers below 180g by specifying in the section on sizing that in Classes Extra and I the size range must be specified. An additional proposal was to add a footnote to the size group below 180g indicating that cucumbers of this size can also be called mini-cucumbers.

69. Some delegations proposed indicating length in addition to weight while others expressed concern that it is challenging to measure cucumbers below 180g or that these cucumbers are graded by eye and packed directly into the package. The compromise proposal was to not amend the sizing provisions but the provisions on labelling the size, and specifying that for the cucumbers below 180g the size range or the number of cucumbers or “mini cucumbers” may be indicated.

70. The Specialized Section agreed to make a new proposal not to amend the sizing provisions but the provisions on labelling the size, and specifying that for the cucumbers below 180g the size range or the number of cucumbers or “mini cucumbers” may be indicated. Delegations will have time to consult their industries during the consultation period.

Onions

71. The delegation of Spain introduced the proposal to amend the provision on sizing in the standard for onions to increase the range in size between onions permitted in the same package. The delegate reported an increasing demand for onions which range in size between 60mm and 90mm or 55 and 85mm in the same package and highlighted that the current provision does not allow for this. The proposal was to amend the provision concerning sizing – to replace 20mm with “30mm or over” for the largest range, and to delete the last indent.

72. Some countries expressed concern that the proposed size range was too large and may jeopardize homogeneity in size of produce. Delegations proposed to amend the last indent

only and allow for the size range between 30mm to 60mm instead of proposed 70mm in diameter.

73. The Specialized Section agreed to amend the standard for onions accordingly. It decided to forward the text of the revised standard to the Working Party for approval.

Watermelons

74. Germany introduced the proposal on amending classification in the standard for watermelons by removing the cause of skin defects allowed in Class I and Class II.

75. The proposal to amend the standard was supported by a majority of countries and the Specialized Section agreed to amend the standard accordingly. It decided to forward the text of the revised standard to the Working Party for approval.

Apricots

76. Germany introduced two proposals for amending the standard for apricots. One proposal referred to clarification of tolerance provision for Class II and the other would allow for replacing the name of the variety with synonyms in Classes Extra and I and indicate a trade name in addition to a variety or the synonym.

77. Several delegations expressed concerns with regard to using undefined synonyms as well as including trade names, highlighting possible confusion in the absence of an official source to verify those varieties.

78. The Specialized Section did not approve the use the synonyms, while many delegations agreed to the proposal to use the trade name or trademark only in addition to a variety name. It was agreed to explore whether there is any official source for synonyms that can be used.

79. The Specialized Section agreed to the proposals by placing the text related to synonyms in square brackets. Delegations needing time to consult their industry and to check for an official source for synonyms may use the consultation period.

Early and ware potatoes

80. The delegation of Germany introduced the proposal to amend the Early and ware potatoes standard's provisions on uniformity and labelling by allowing mixtures of varieties of distinctly different skin colour as well as indicating the cooking type of each variety in that mixture.

81. Most delegations agreed to introduce specifications on mixtures of ware potatoes of varieties with distinctly different skin colour, however the proposal concerning indication of cooking type was not supported.

82. The Specialized Section agreed on that mixture without the mandatory labelling of the cooking type. It decided to forward the text of the revised standard to the Working Party for approval.

Cauliflower

83. The Specialized Section reviewed the proposed revisions to the standard for cauliflower outlined by the delegation from Germany. The proposal related to amending the standard's provision on minimum requirements to reflect different degrees of trimming, while illustrating it with pictures. It was noted that this proposal was previously discussed and largely supported at the OECD session with the same photos, provided by France.

84. Most of delegations supported the proposal. The Specialized Section decided to amend the standard accordingly. It decided to forward the text of the revised standard to the Working Party for approval.

Avocados, pineapples and citrus fruit

85. The delegation of Sweden introduced a proposal to amend the minimum requirements in the standards for avocados, pineapples and citrus fruit to allow dead pests on the skin of those fruits. It was proposed to amend the indent referring to pests and to specify that the product should be “free from living pests”.

86. Some countries opposed this proposal to avoid disruption in trade, stating the challenge with determining whether the pest is dead or alive, and expressed concern that this provision would reflect negatively on the presentation of fruit. Moreover, it was emphasized, that in citrus fruit, where the skin is frequently used for human consumption, the pests affect edibility of the fruit regardless of their condition.

87. Some countries supported the proposal but expressed concern about cross-border transportation and potential rejection at border controls.

88. Considering the concerns of the delegations put forward, the Specialized Section did not approve the proposed amendment of the standard and referred the delegations of Sweden to consult the OECD with regard to interpretation of the standard and relevant illustrations.

(c) Revisions to the Standard Layout for UNECE Standards for Fresh Fruit and Vegetables

89. The Specialized Section discussed the proposal to increase the total tolerance allowed within Class II from the current 10% to 20% (a proposal already submitted in 2018, 2019 and 2020), to allow a greater quantity of produce in Class II and help reduce food loss and waste. As no consensus was reached during the previous consultations, the Specialized Section was invited to discuss this proposal further and make a relevant decision.

90. Some countries agreed to increase the tolerance in the Standard Layout for non-progressive defects (shape, colour and size) but not for progressive defects. Other countries expressed concern that 20% for all standards would be too much and proposed to apply a tolerance on a produce-by-produce basis. The delegation of Spain reported that its industry works well with the current provision for tolerances and does not support the increase from 10 to 20% in general. For individual standards, Spain will consider reviewing a potential increase in tolerance. Italy also supported a product-by-product approach instead of increasing the level of tolerance in all products. As no consensus was reached for the fourth year in a row, the Specialized Section decided to suspend this discussion for the time being.

91. The Specialized Section reviewed the proposal concerning size tolerances, to introduce a total tolerance of 20% in Class II. Delegations of the Netherlands, United Kingdom and United States expressed their support in the effort to minimise food loss, however Spain reiterated its position with regard to not supporting this proposal. As this proposal cannot be decided by consensus for the fourth year in a row, the Specialized Section decided to suspend this discussion for the time being.

92. The Specialized Section reviewed the proposal on labelling requirements under the provisions concerning marking, proposing to align identification of packer/dispatcher with EU legislation and include an option to replace the name and physical address of importer or seller. This proposal was not supported by the delegation of Spain who suggested to include a code representing the packer and/or dispatcher/exporter to facilitate produce tracing. A provision for pre-packages was not agreed upon and was removed from the Standard Layout. No consensus was reached on the labelling requirement for packer and dispatcher.

93. An additional proposal from Germany concerning Section IV, Provisions concerning tolerances, suggested adding a footnote for clarification that the application of the OECD sampling provisions is recommended to determine the tolerances. The footnote was supported by the Specialized Section. A further proposal was made by the delegation from Germany on amending the footnote under Section VI, Provisions concerning marking, to request the alpha-2 country/area code for identification of packer and or dispatcher/exporter.

94. The delegation from Spain proposed to amend the footnote concerning market provisions on sales package and add “bearing these particulars”.

95. The delegation from the Netherlands made a proposal to allow the P.O. box instead of physical address. Due to some time constraints and the late submission of the proposal, the Specialized Section decided to postpone discussion until the 2022 meeting.

96. The Specialized Section agreed on the amendments related to the footnotes in the section on tolerances and labelling.

XVI. Revision of explanatory brochures: Persimmon

97. The Specialized Section decided to postpone this discussion to the next session. The delegation of the United States will send its comments to the delegation of Germany.

XVII. Future work

98. The Specialized Section decided to place the following items on the agenda for 2022:

- Standard Layout (allowance of P.O. box instead of physical address for packer / dispatcher / exporter);
- Brochure for persimmons (illustrations on internal browning);
- Leafy vegetables (inclusion of pak choi (*Brassica rapa* L. subsp. *chinensis* (L:))).

99. Any other proposals for future work should be sent to the secretariat as early as possible, preferably by 1 February 2022.

XVIII. Election of officers

100. The Specialized Section elected Mr. Cyril Julius (South Africa) Chair and Mr. Umed Aslanov (Tajikistan) Vice-Chair. The Specialized Section thanked the outgoing delegate of Germany and current Chair of the Specialized Section, Ms. Ulrike Bickelmann, for her many years of service as a delegate and her time as Chair as well as her much-appreciated support for the work, the events and capacity-building organized by the Specialized Section and the Working Party.

101. The outgoing Chair also thanked the Specialized Section and the secretariat for excellent collaboration and support over these many years.

XIX. Adoption of the report

102. The Specialized Section adopted the report of its sixty-ninth session (ECE/CTCS/WP.7/GE.1/2021/2) in a written procedure.
