



Economic Commission for Europe**Steering Committee on Trade Capacity and Standards****Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards****Seventy-sixth session**

Geneva, 15-17 November 2021

**Report of the Seventy-sixth session of the Working Party on
Agricultural Quality Standards****I. Introduction**

1. The meeting was chaired by Ms. Agnieszka Sudol (Poland), Chairperson of the Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards (WP.7).
2. The Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) Ms. Olga Algayerova opened the seventy-sixth session of WP.7. She congratulated the Working Party on its seventy-sixth session and expressed her appreciation for the Working Party's valuable work over many years as well as commended the delegates for their continuous efforts and dedication to the work of WP.7 and its Specialized Sections. This work drives a very important international agenda for sustainable trade, production, and consumption, including through the food loss and waste work.
3. She highlighted two important events on the global food arena, the *International Year of Fruit and Vegetables*, as proclaimed by the UN General Assembly and the *UN Food Systems Summit* convened by UN Secretary-General on 23 September 2021. She emphasized both events as an opportunity to intensify efforts to make food systems more inclusive, resilient, and sustainable.
4. She further highlighted the work of the Specialized Section on Standardization of Fresh Fruit and Vegetables and expressed her words of appreciation to the outgoing Chair, Ms. Ulrike Bickelmann of Germany. She also commended the work of the Specialized Sections on Standardization of Dry and Dried Produce, Seed Potatoes and Meat, highlighting their contribution to sustainable production in different sectors with over 100 quality standards developed and updated on a regular basis.
5. She informed the Working Party of the UNECE Commission's decision to intensify efforts towards promoting circular economy and sustainable use of natural resources and highlighted a recently launched 4-year project on *Accelerating the transition towards a Circular Economy in the UNECE region*, implemented under United Nations Development Account (UNDA).
6. Looking forward she noted UNECE's commitment to supporting proposed activities towards enhancing a circular economy focus in the region. She also mentioned the linkages of UNECE work to advancing international trade, developing competitive markets, and delivering on the 2030 Agenda. She concluded by thanking delegates for their active



engagement in advancing sustainable food systems and wished meeting participants successful deliberations.

II. Attendance

7. Representatives of the following countries attended the meeting: Australia, Austria, Belarus, Belgium, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Morocco, Netherlands, Philippines, Poland, Russian Federation, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Tajikistan, Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America.

8. The European Commission was represented.

9. The following international organizations and intergovernmental organizations participated in the session: Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), International Trade Centre (ITC), United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD).

10. Representatives of the following non-governmental organizations, companies, academia and independent experts participated in the session: Austrian NGO “Hilfswerk International”, AUS-Meat Limited, Birkenwood PT (Australia), California Walnut Commission, Freshfel Europe, International Nut and Dried Fruit Council (INC).

III. Adoption of the agenda

11. The delegations adopted the revised provisional agenda without modifications.

IV. Matters arising since the last session

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

12. The Director of the Economic Cooperation and Trade Division, Ms. Elisabeth Tuerk, welcomed the delegates, highlighting the WP.7 as one of the longest standing work streams of the UNECE. She congratulated the Working Party for making significant progress in the past year and holding all meetings, resulting in a record number of 18 standards presented for adoption. She expressed appreciation to the secretariat for supporting the activities of the Working Party under the guidance of the Chief of Market Access Section, Mr. Mika Vepsalainen.

13. She highlighted the long-standing partnerships with other organizations including the OECD, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the World Customs Organization (WCO) as well as other United Nations agencies, such as UNCTAD and the other Regional Commissions.

14. She introduced the topic of the circular economy and sustainable use of natural resources, emanating from UNECE’s 69th Commission session, held on 20 and 21 April 2021. She mentioned a short background note presented for discussion under a dedicated agenda item 9. She further informed delegates about the *Roundtable on Fostering Circularity in Food Trade*, co-hosted by UNECE with UNCTAD and the United Nations Forum on Sustainability Standards (UNFSS) on the side-lines of the Working Party session. She clarified that the roundtable was aimed at providing context in response to the decisions taken at the 69th Commission session and that it was a separate event, open to participation by all.

15. She thanked the delegations for their work in the course of the year and reiterated UNECE’s commitment to the agricultural quality standards work, highlighting them as the core of the Working Party’s normative work.

16. In closing, she expressed her appreciation to the Working Party for its work and commitment to advancing international trade through its standard-setting work. She

highlighted high attendance and geographical representation in the meeting demonstrated by more than 80 participants attending from over 30 countries globally.

17. The Chief of Market Access Section, Mr. Mika Vepsalainen, informed delegations that the Steering Committee on Trade Capacity and Standards last met on 21 and 22 June 2021 in hybrid mode. He highlighted two studies – the Study on Regulatory and Procedural Barriers to Trade in Serbia (<https://unece.org/trade/publications/regulatory-and-procedural-barriers-trade-serbia-needs-assessment-ecetrade460>), which was approved at the recent meeting, and a similar study that was being conducted in Uzbekistan, and would be presented at the next session of the Steering Committee in June 2022.

18. He expressed his gratitude towards all delegations for their support of the work of UNECE in these challenging times and commended the Working Party's Specialized Sections for their achievements in 2021. All their sessions had been held, standards and guides had been revised and adopted, and new areas of work had been discussed.

19. He reported on the endorsement of the Chair's Note on the Informal Virtual Consultations by the Steering Committee and congratulated the Working Party for its results over the past year. He also explained that pursuant to the special procedures during the COVID-19 period, any decisions emanating from the session would be submitted to a silence procedure to the Geneva-based Permanent Missions in line with the special arrangements.

(b) Recent developments in other organizations

20. The delegate of Belarus (in his capacity as a Vice-Chair of the Steering Committee on Trade Capacity and Standards) welcomed participants, emphasizing the relevance and importance of the work undertaken by the Working Party on the Agricultural Quality Standards. He gave a brief overview of the Steering Committee session held in June 2021 and noted that its outcomes were reported and endorsed in the EXCOM session in October 2021. He congratulated the Chair of the Working Party and the secretariat for the progress made in the past year, including on the food loss and waste front. He briefly highlighted the 69th Commission session held in April 2021, which was devoted to the topic of the circular economy and the sustainable use of natural resources.

21. The representative from OECD presented the preliminary results of a joint UNECE-OECD study measuring the impact of UNECE marketing standards and OECD explanatory brochures on trade in selected fruit and vegetables. This is the first attempt to quantify the impact of the marketing standards, and initial results demonstrate a significant and positive impact on trade, boosting trade flows by as much as 50% in some cases. The OECD and UNECE secretariats will continue collaborating to finalize the study and present its results at the 2022 session of the Working Party.

22. The representative from the INC introduced the work and scope of the INC which included representing more than 860 dried fruit and nut companies spread over 80 countries across the five continents covering a total of 16 nuts and dried fruit. He highlighted the INC's reinforced commitment to sustainability and to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which resulted in development of a roadmap of action towards the achievement of relevant SDGs, focusing on SDG 2, 5, 12, 13, and 15.

23. As an observer, the INC collaborates with the UNECE on quality standards for tree nuts and dried fruits and regularly participates in UNECE Dry and Dried Produce sessions and workshops. The INC highlighted recent collaboration with UNECE and FAO in the creation of a short video documentary on the health properties of wild nuts and their contribution to sustainable livelihoods on the occasion of the *International Day of Forests* in March 2021. He further reported that Mr. Pino Calcagni, Chairman of the Sustainability, Scientific and Government Affairs Committee of the INC, participated in the workshop "*Regional training on sustainable walnut quality*" organized by UNECE under the UNDA project on 8 September 2021.

24. In conclusion, the INC announced the establishment of a new Sustainability Working Group aimed at advising and leading the INC's Sustainability Agenda and promoting activities in alignment with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

25. The Working Party took note of the information provided by partner organizations.

(c) Adoption of standards

26. The secretariat informed the Working Party of the decisions that had been adopted through an intersessional approval procedure following the Virtual Informal Consultations of the Working Party in 2020. The secretariat informed the Working Party that the Chair's Note and decisions were formally endorsed by the Steering Committee in their session in June 2021. The Working Party was asked to take note of the following documents adopted:

- Programme of work of the Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards 2021
- Report of the twenty-eighth session of the Specialized Section on Standardization of Meat
- Report of the sixty-eighth session of the Specialized Section on Standardization of Fresh Fruit and Vegetables
- Revised standard for Headed Cabbages
- Revised standard for Table Grapes
- Revised standard for Sweet Peppers
- Minimum Quality Specifications for Fresh Fruit and Vegetables
- Update of lists of varieties (standards for Apples, Pears, Plums)
- Revised standard for Persimmons
- Report of the sixty-seventh session of the Specialized Section on Standardization of Dry and Dried Produce
- Recommendation for Inshell Pecans
- Recommendation for Pecan Kernels
- Recommendation for Sweet Apricot Kernels
- Standard Layout for UNECE Standards for Dry and Dried Produce
- Explanatory brochure for Dried Apricots
- Explanatory poster for Walnut Kernels
- Explanatory poster for Dried Figs
- Explanatory poster for Dried Grapes
- Explanatory poster for Prunes
- Report of the forty-seventh session of the Specialized Section on Standardization of Seed Potatoes

27. The Working Party took note of the decisions that had been adopted through an intersessional approval procedure following the Informal Virtual Consultations in 2020 and endorsed by the Steering Committee in 2021.

V. Capacity-building and promotional activities

28. The secretariat reported on the ongoing work to finalize an online training on agricultural quality standards and food loss and waste. Consisting of four modules, targeting producers as well as small- and medium- sized enterprises, the content of the modules had been circulated to the Specialized Section on Standardization of Fresh Fruit and Vegetables earlier this year for comments. The secretariat reported on the timelines to complete the training and make it freely available as an online self-paced course, to be finalized during the first quarter of 2022. The secretariat is currently looking at options for hosting the course, either on the UNECE website or in collaboration with FAO, through its eLearning Academy. The secretariat will keep delegates posted on further developments.

29. The delegate from Germany expressed concern with not having been consulted and given an opportunity to provide feedback on the learning course. The secretariat explained

that the modules were circulated for comments in August 2021 and received no feedback. As the project was planned to be completed by the end of the year, the secretariat moved forward with the review. As more delegations confirmed that they have not received the slides from the secretariat, it was agreed that the course material will be re-circulated for comments, following the WP.7 session and the course launched by March 2022.

VI. Electronic quality certificates for fresh fruit and vegetables

30. A member of the UNECE secretariat Mr. Markus Pikart updated the Working Party on progress made on the development of a functional specification for an electronic Conformity Certificate Management System which is developed jointly with UNCTAD.

31. The specification documents the general processes when requesting, processing, and issuing conformity certificates. The first version of the specification focuses on the processes during export. The draft of this specification would be circulated to Parties for comments shortly.

32. After review by Competent Authorities UNECE and UNCTAD will seek support of donors to develop an off-the-shelf and cloud based electronic Conformity Certificate Management System based on the specification. Parties interested to adopt such a system were invited to contact the secretariat.

33. The delegation from the United Kingdom expressed interest in using eQuality certificates and moving towards eCertification. The delegation from the Netherlands was also supportive of the effort and expressed interest in the digital version of the Quality Certificate.

34. The Working Party took note of the update and thanked the UNECE and UNCTAD secretariat for its work. The secretariat will circulate the document shortly and will work with donors to raise resources for the project implementation.

VII. Specialized Section on Standardization of Seed Potatoes

35. The Chair of the Specialized Section on Standardization of Seed Potatoes provided an update on its progress and the decisions taken during its forty-eighth session held in hybrid mode in March 2021. She further reviewed the work of the Specialized Section and presented the amendments to Annex I and Annex VII of the Seed Potato standard submitted for adoption of the Working Party along with the revised draft guide on capacity-building and a poster on the benefits of certified seed.

36. The Specialized Section completed a survey on testing methods for bacterial pathogens of potatoes that are associated with seed certification, which received 51 responses from 32 countries. She also provided an overview of other items discussed at the 2021 session, including the draft guide on mini tuber production; a revision of the list of national certification schemes, the list of designated certification authorities, and the list of varieties; an update on development of a knowledge-sharing and resource reference platform and the True Potato Seed discussion.

37. As regard to future work, the Chair highlighted the revision of the entire standard for Seed Potatoes, draft guide on mini tuber production; a possibility of a position paper on the conclusions of the survey; capacity-building activities and further development of a knowledge sharing and resource reference page; lot size of seed potatoes; discussion on dormant tuber testing for viruses; true potato seed and potato plants in pots; new and emerging diseases and pests; the Potato Mop Top virus and herbicide carry over and seed potatoes.

38. The Working Party thanked the Specialized Section for its excellent work throughout the year and adopted the following documents:

- Report of the forty-eighth session of the Specialized Section on Standardization of Seed potatoes
- Amendments to Annex I and Annex VII of the Standard for Seed Potatoes

- Revised draft guide on capacity-building
- Poster on the benefits of certified seed

VIII. Specialized Section on Standardization of Dry and Dried Produce

39. The Chairperson of the Specialized Section on Standardization of Dry and Dried Produce started his report with the note of appreciation to two outgoing delegates – Ms. Ulrike Bickelmann of Germany, for many years of service and to Ms. Ana Bermejo from INC, for participation in the Specialized Section’s activities on behalf of the INC members.

40. He reviewed in detail the work of the Specialized Section and presented the new and revised standards along with the recommendations submitted for adoption. In 2021, the Specialized Section held its 68th session in hybrid format and several more online follow-up sessions to finalize negotiations on standards.

41. The Specialized Section made substantial progress over the year and submitted one new standard for Sweet Apricot Kernels and seven recommendations for adoption for a 1-year trial as well as the revised Standard Layout for UNECE Standards for Dry and Dried Produce. The Working Party was requested to note the following comments:

- Delegation of Turkey – concern that maximum moisture content of 6.5% is too high and can lead to rapid product deterioration and subsequent food loss.
- Delegation of the United States – concern that sweet apricot kernels which naturally contain amygdalin, may release cyanide after consumption and pose safety risks to consumers. (while Canada and the EU have ML of 20 ppm, the US is still working towards an ML).

42. In terms of the future work – the Chair indicated the revision of Cashew Kernels standard, development of the explanatory posters on cashew kernels and almond kernels, alignment of existing standards with the revised Standard Layout, and organizing of a Sampling plan workshop, which had been postponed in the past two years due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

43. He further provided an update on finalizing the Sampling Plan for Tree Nuts and Dried Produce Guidelines for Inspections of Dry and Dried Produce and proposed their adoption via an intersessional adoption procedure pending their finalization which was mainly editorial and related to picture layout.

44. The Working Party thanked the Specialized Section for its excellent work throughout the year and adopted the following documents:

- Report of the sixty-eighth session of the Specialized Section on Standardization of Dry and Dried Produce
- Recommendation for Inshell Pecans
- Recommendation for Pecan Kernels
- Recommendation for Dried Persimmons
- Recommendation for Raw and Roasted Inshell Peanuts
- Recommendation for Raw and Roasted Peanut Kernels
- Standard for Sweet Apricot Kernels (New)
- Revised standard for Prunes
- Revised standard for Dates
- The text of the Sampling Plan for Tree Nuts and Dried Produce Guidelines for Inspections of Dry and Dried Produce

IX. Specialized Section on Standardization of Fresh Fruit and Vegetables

45. The Chairperson of the Specialized Section on Standardization of Fresh Fruit and Vegetables presented in detail the work of the Section including the revised standards. The Specialized Section held its sixty-ninth regular session in hybrid mode followed by several online follow-up sessions during the year. As the newly elected Chair, he expressed his appreciation to the outgoing Chair, Ms. Ulrike Bickelmann of Germany for her many years of dedicated service and for sharing her valuable expertise with the Specialized Section and the Working Party over the past two decades.

46. He provided an overview of proposed amendments to eight standards discussed in the Specialized Section and presented one new standard submitted for adoption by the Working Party as well as the revised Standard Layout for UNECE Standards for Fresh Fruit and Vegetables. He mentioned that the standard for Peas which was intended for adoption by the Working Party had to be withdrawn, due to comments received from the delegation on Belgium, related to the proposed amendment to the “intact” requirement.

47. Related to the future work, he highlighted revisions to the standard for Peas, revisions to the Standard Layout for UNECE Standards for Fresh Fruit and Vegetables to allow P.O. Box instead of physical address of the packer/dispatcher/exporter, revision of the brochure for persimmons, and revision of standard for Leavy Vegetables.

48. The delegate from Belgium thanked the Chair of the Specialized Section for withdrawing the Peas standard and expressed its position related to the discussion and definition of kitchen ready products. She invited the Specialized Section on Fresh Fruit and Vegetables to open a debate on this matter with its members, explaining that it could also feed into the ongoing revisions of marketing standards at the European Union level. If appropriate, they recommended putting it on the agenda for future work. The delegate from the Netherland also supported Belgium’s proposal.

49. The Working Party thanked the Specialized Section for its excellent work throughout the year and adopted the following documents:

- Report of the sixty-ninth session of the Specialized Section on Standardization of Fresh Fruit and Vegetables
- Revised standard for Carrots
- Revised standard for Strawberries
- Revised standard for Fresh Figs
- Revised standard for Chinese Cabbage
- Revised standard for Cucumbers
- Revised standard for Watermelons
- Revised standard for Apricots
- Revised standard for Cauliflower
- Standard for Pomegranates (New)
- Revised Standard Layout for UNECE Standards for Fresh Fruit and Vegetables

50. The delegate from Sweden informed delegates of the update to the 2020 UNECE Code of Good Practice and thanked all countries who participated this year. An aim was making it applicable in all countries and for all types of markets globally. A new section on transporters was added to those on producers, traders and retailers. While the work provided a good overview of applicable measures at different parts of the supply chain, each chapter could also be used independently. Several annexes related to conditions of storage and transportation of produce were included.

51. The Working Party took note of the updated Code of Good Practice. The delegate from Sweden took the opportunity to thank the outgoing Chair, Ms. Ulrike Bickelmann, for

her contribution and involvement in the work of the Fresh Fruit and Vegetables section and other Specialized Sections and congratulated the newly elected Chair, Mr. Cyril Julius.

X. Specialized Section on Standardization of Meat

52. The Chairperson of the Specialized Section on Standardization Meat presented an update on its work, explaining that there were no standards submitted for approval this year. The Specialized Section held its twenty-ninth session in hybrid mode in September 2021 and three more follow-up meetings related to the on-going joint work with WCO on alignment of the UNECE cut codes with the Harmonized Commodity Descriptions and Coding System (HS codes). He provided an update on the progress on eating quality, livestock language and a potential development of international minimum sustainability guidelines for the meat sector.

53. As regards to future work, he highlighted the revision of the Standard for Porcine Meat (marbling and fat content), the development of an international standard for animal protein derived from connective tissue; an update on development of a sustainability framework for the meat sector, on eating quality and on the development of a Livestock Language as well as an update on the alignment of the UNECE cut codes with the Harmonized Commodity Description and Coding System (HS codes).

54. The Working Party thanked the Specialized Section for its excellent work throughout the year, expressed support for the collaboration with the WCO and adopted the following document:

- Report of the twenty-ninth session of the Specialized Section on Standardization of Meat

XI. Discussion on new areas of work in support of sustainable development

55. The Chief of the Market Access Section introduced several of the items related to new areas of work in support of sustainable development. He informed that a first-ever UN Food Systems Summit was held on 23 September 2021. The UNECE Secretariat, in collaboration with other Regional Commissions of the United Nations, had published a joint policy brief entitled “*Transforming Food Systems*”(<https://unece.org/trade/publications/transforming-food-systems>), launched in connection with *UN Food Systems Summit*.

56. Considering the important role of micro-, small- and medium- sized enterprises (MSMEs) in sustainable trade, he invited the views of the Working Party, noting that one issue of potential relevance may be exploring a possibility of taking advantage of the standards and increasing the ability to meet the quality of those standards. He also mentioned the nexus work, which had been a focus over the past years, noting that agricultural quality standards are part of the nexus of sustainable use of natural resources, together with UNECE Environment and Transport divisions as well as UN/CEFACT secretariat.

57. He further informed the Working Party about the activities on resilient food supply chains and post-COVID-19 recovery implemented under a UNDA project, under which five studies had been issued on the impact of regulatory and procedural barriers to trade in post-COVID-19 recovery. Finally, joint work is currently underway with OECD to analyse the impact of agricultural quality standards on the trade of agricultural produce.

58. On the topic of the circular economy, the Director of the Economic Cooperation and Trade Division presented the outcomes of the 69th Commission, held under the theme “*Promoting circular economy and sustainable use of natural resources in the UNECE region*”, and the related decisions by the Commission, as contained in document E/2021/37 (E/ECE/1494). She briefly informed the Working Party about the discussions in the *Roundtable on Fostering Circularity in Food Trade*, co-organized with UNCTAD and UNFSS under a UNDA Project on 16 November 2021. She invited the views of WP.7

delegates on the potential role of the Working Party in relation to the topic of circular economy and sustainable use of natural resources.

59. The Chair of the Specialized section on Seed Potatoes informed the delegates about a paper entitled “*Food loss and waste: The case of seed potato certification and the UNECE seed potato certification standard*” (https://unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/trade/agr/meetings/ge.06/2017/RapporteursMtg_TheNetherlands/Food_Loss_Waste.pdf), drafted by its previous Chair which is available on the UNECE website. She noted that use of high-quality seed potatoes maximise useable yield and quality and seed potatoes generate minimal waste, considering that they can be eaten or used as animal feed, in case of rejection by an inspection. The specialized section on Seed Potatoes has published on the UNECE website the poster “*Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) and the UNECE Standard for Seed Potatoes*” ([PowerPoint Presentation \(unece.org\)](#)). She further noted that the delegates in the Specialized Sections are not experts on circular economy, referring to the fact that their expertise is focused on quality and pests of seed potatoes.

60. The delegate from Germany noted that while the circular economy is a very important topic, the issue should not affect the core activity of the Working Party. She highlighted that since the Working Party sets minimum quality standards, adapting them to climate change, supporting more sustainable production conditions and consumption patterns, and considering difficulties in trade, each standard may be seen as a contribution to a more circular economy. She further noted that the standards that are developed in UNECE are very valuable. These standards will continue to grow in importance as trade determines that its own private standards (built on top of the UNECE standards) are too stringent in the face of climate change. Consequently, the mandate of the German delegation to WP.7 is explicitly and exclusively directed at standardization activities. She also sought clarification on where in the UNECE the work on FeedUP@UN was situated. It was important for WP.7 and its Specialized Sections to be involved in the further process and to be regularly informed.

61. The representative of the Central Asian Working Group (CAWG) noted a variety of concepts such as bioeconomy, green economy, circular economy, and that it would be useful to clarify the difference between the concepts.

62. The delegate from the United States indicated that the expertise of the Working Party and its Specialized Sections lies in the area of minimum quality standards, and that some of the issues related to circular economy are beyond the scope of the WP.7 mandate. He noted that while there is a role for UNECE in the circular economy sphere, the way it is stressed within the proposed programme of work should be narrowed and tailored to the functions of the WP.7. He suggested four areas of action, including fostering dialogue; disseminating information and developing guidelines on standards and their application; building capacity; and ensuring implementation. Finally, he recommended that the Steering Committee on Trade Capacity and Standards along with Working Party 7 Secretariat in the future should consult the bureaus of the Specialized Sections ahead of proposing new areas of work.

63. The delegate of Spain supported the position of delegations of Germany and the United States, noting that while circular economy was an important topic, the core work of the WP.7 was on standardization. She further noted that the WP.7 could contribute to achieving the goals of circular economy within its current Terms of Reference, as a common language on standards is essential for achieving the SDGs. She further emphasized the need to continue collaborating with international organizations to avoid duplication of efforts.

XII. Programme of work of the Working Party for 2022

64. In a written statement the Government of Switzerland expressed its concern about the work of the WP.7 and its Specialized Sections, stating that the discussion on the programme of work of the Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards 2022 was an opportunity to underline the position of the delegation of Switzerland which found the draft work programme too closely linked to the new theme of the international agenda of circular economy. They noted that pursuant to these Terms of Reference of the Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards (2018), the Specialized Sections are setting (marketing)

standards for agricultural products, and that this task should not be diluted with other tasks as relevant as they are. The delegates of Switzerland in WP.7 and its Specialized sections are not the experts competent to deal with the subject of the circular economy. To this end, the Swiss delegation suggested excluding any links between the circular economy and the core activities of WP.7 that would affect them.

65. The delegate of South Africa concurred with the statements expressed by the delegates of Germany and the United States and suggested looking at the wording of the programme of work in this regard. This was supported by the delegate of Germany who proposed going through the document page by page. The delegate of the United States proposed that instead of repeating parts of the Terms of Reference in the programme of work, the latter could include a short paragraph referring to the Terms of Reference. He also suggested several changes to the programme of work, which were submitted in writing.

66. The programme of work was amended as suggested by the delegations. The United States suggested that for the next programme of work the “introduction” should be in a simplified format, i.e., referencing the Terms of Reference and other relevant documents rather than using them.

67. The Working Party adopted a revised program of work which is attached as Annex I to this report (p.12).

XIII. Future work

68. The Working Party decided to consider the following items for its future work.

- Elaborate four brochures on practical application of Code of Good Practice
- Initiate a debate on marketing standards for kitchen-ready products
- Continuation of work in Specialized Sections
- Organization of a roundtable to exchange experiences on FeedUP@UN and Code of Good Practice implementation
- E-quality certificates update

69. Further topics of interest to the Working Party should be sent to the secretariat in the coming months.

XIV. Other business

70. The following meetings are planned for 2022:

- Specialized Section on Standardization of Seed Potatoes: 17-18 March 2022
- Specialized Section on Fresh Fruit and Vegetables: 16-18 May 2022
- Specialized Section on Standardization of Dry and Dried Produce: 15-17 June 2022
- Specialized Section on Standardization of Meat: 28-30 September 2022
- Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards: 15-17 November 2022

71. Possible changes in venue and dates will be communicated in due course.

XV. Election of officers

72. The delegations elected Ms. Agnieszka Sudol (Poland) as Chair and Mr. Bucky Gwartney (United States) as Vice-Chair.

XVI. Adoption of the report

73. The Working Party adopted the report of its seventy-sixth session (ECE/CTCS/WP.7/2021/2) in an intersessional approval procedure, followed by a silence procedure which closed on 31 December 2021.

Annex

Programme of work of the Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards 2022

Submitted by the secretariat

I. Introduction

1. The Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards (hereinafter referred to as the Working Party), established by the Geneva Protocol/Understanding (1958. Rev. 1965, 1985 and 2015)- acting within the framework of the mandates and policies of the United Nations and the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), and under the overall guidance of the ECE Steering Committee on Trade Capacity and Standards, is entrusted with the implementation of the work under the ECE Trade Sub-programme covering “covering agricultural quality standards taking into account sustainable production trade and consumption patterns”. The work complements and is carried out in partnership with work undertaken by other international bodies.
2. The aim of its work is to foster:
 - (a) Market transparency - define a common trading language, with minimum quality requirements for agricultural produce that facilitate fair and sustainable trade, prevent technical barriers to trade and contribute to economic growth (SDG 8).
 - (b) Food security - promote the sustainable production and consumption of quality agricultural produce, including the prevention of food loss and waste (SDG 2, SDG 12); and
 - (c) Collaboration - undertake capacity-building and awareness-raising activities in cooperation with other public and private sector international bodies (in support of the previous two activities) (SDG 17).
3. The Working Party operates under the ECE Rules of Procedure and the Guidelines on procedures and practices for ECE bodies, as agreed in Commission Decision A (65).
4. The Working Party is open for participation by all United Nations Member States in compliance with the accreditation process contained in the guidelines on procedures and practices for ECE bodies (E/2013/37-E/ECE/1464).
5. In addition, representatives from relevant international organizations non-governmental organizations, and the private sector, can also be invited as observers, in compliance with the United Nations rules and practices in this respect.
6. The Working Party defines its working procedures and those of its Specialized Sections.
7. The Working Party shall:
 - (a) Develop internationally agreed commercial quality standards for agricultural produce taking into consideration national standards and industry and trade practices for fresh fruit and vegetables (including early and ware potatoes); dry and dried produce; seed potatoes; meat; and eggs. The Working Party may develop standards, on request from countries, for other agricultural products, subject to the availability of resources;
 - (b) Revise and amend existing standards to reflect changing production, trading and marketing conditions, taking SDG targets into consideration;
 - (c) Undertake activities to harmonize the international application of its standards by developing and disseminating interpretative and guidance material;
 - (d) Collect, communicate, and analyse, when necessary, production, trade and inspection practices and other areas relevant to sustainable development, implementation and

promotion of its standards and guidance material and other areas relevant to sustainable development;

(e) Undertake training activities targeted at the public and private sectors to support sustainable development of production and trade;

(f) Promote uniform quality-control procedures and the use of the model quality conformity certificate through the Specialized Sections and in cooperation with governmental, inter-governmental and other organizations and especially the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development Scheme for the Application of International Standards for Fruit and Vegetables implementing standards to achieve uniformity of inspection methods and comparability of results;

(g) Cooperate with other international organizations and standard-setting bodies, such as the relevant Codex Alimentarius Commission committees and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development Scheme for the Application of International Standards for Fruit and Vegetables, to avoid duplication of work, divergence in standard requirements and interpretation. Ensure that the standard-setting process is consistent with relevant international rules.

(h) Facilitate communication between private and public stakeholder organizations with an interest in the standards to provide a basis for transparent, fair and sustainable trade.

II. Draft programme of work for Working Party 7 for 2022

(a) **Market transparency: define a common trading language, with minimum quality requirements for agricultural produce that facilitate fair and sustainable trade, preventing technical barriers to trade and contribute to economic growth**

8. During 2022, the Working Party will provide guidance on the priorities for future work identified by the Specialized Sections and potential synergies whenever possible, additional areas of work. The Working Party shall review and adopt proposed new and revised agricultural quality standards arising from the specialized sections and associated guidance material/literature, thus ensuring ECE agricultural quality standards remain relevant, continue to facilitate trade while simultaneously supporting the achievement of the SDGs - including Goal 2.

(b) **Food security and sustainability: promote sustainable production and consumption of quality agricultural produce, including the prevention of food loss and waste**

9. The Working Party has aligned its work with the SDGs and where possible focus on improving sustainable production and trade particularly through its focus on the prevention of food loss/waste and related areas of work in cooperation with other international organizations, the private sector and civil society. This has resulted in the organization of international conferences on cross-cutting themes involving all four Specialized Sections and the promotion of traceability of agricultural produce, food loss prevention, sustainable food production and standards at fora at national and international levels. This work directly supports SDG Target 12.3 on halving food loss by 2030.

10. In 2022, the Working Party will continue its work related to the implementation of Goal 12 and its Target 12.3 on halving food loss by 2030 and related Goals. In particular, the Working Party will work:

- with its Specialized Sections on intensifying efforts to review and compile practical measures and tools to help agricultural supply chains participants in products covered by the Specialized Sections to prevent and avoid food waste and food loss in rural and urban areas;
- in cooperation with its Specialized Sections encourage the development of new tools and guidelines and to organize international conferences/workshops to promote the implementation and use of standards by both the private and public sectors.

Note: Additional emerging topics under section (b) in line with the Working Party's mandate may be introduced and/or defined by delegations during in-session discussions.

(c) **Collaboration: undertake capacity building and awareness-raising activities in cooperation with other public and private sector international bodies (in support of the previous two activities)**

11. In 2022, if possible, the Working Party will undertake at least 6 days of capacity-building activities in collaboration with its Specialized Sections. The Specialized Sections will do so in cooperation with relevant ECE partners, other international organizations, the private sector and civil society to work towards the UN SDGs [change references to SDGs in general throughout document], foster linkages such as the internal ECE nexus approaches and achieve greater synergies, coherence and impact for the implementation of Agenda 2030.

III. Deliverables to be implemented in 2022

12. The mandates of the Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards and its subgroups provide the legislative framework for its deliverables. The table below lists all deliverables, by category and subcategory, for the year 2022 that are expected to contribute to the attainment of the objective of the Working Party, as endorsed by the Steering Committee on Trade Capacity and Standards on 21–22 June 2021.

<i>Deliverables</i>	<i>2022</i>
	<i>planned</i>

Quantified deliverables

A. Facilitation of the intergovernmental process and expert bodies	
Parliamentary documentation (number of documents)	
Documentation for the Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards	60
Substantive services for meetings (number of three-hour meetings)	
6. Meetings of the Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards and its specialized sections	26
B. Generation and transfer of knowledge	
Field and technical cooperation projects (number of projects)	
10. Project on food loss and agriculture	1
Seminars, workshops and training events (number of days)	
11. Seminars for standardization and inspection agencies and other stakeholders in transition economies and developing countries in the ECE region or beyond on ECE agricultural quality standards	6
Publications (number of publications)	
17. Publication on agricultural trade and supply chains	1
Technical materials (number of materials)	
20. Standards (new), explanatory brochures, posters and guidelines on agricultural quality	4
C. Substantive deliverables	
Consultation, advice and advocacy: Advisory services to Government officials and other stakeholders in ECE member States on trade facilitation and electronic business, agricultural quality standards, regulatory cooperation and standardization and regulatory and procedural barriers to trade	
D. Communication deliverables	
Outreach programmes, special events and information materials: Booklets, fact sheets, information brochures	
External and media relations: Annual set of press releases for the Unit	
Digital platforms and multimedia content: Update and maintenance of the website and databases of the sub-programme as well as of the portal on “Standards for the SDGs”	

IV. Additional resources being sought

13. If additional resources can be secured, the Working Party will:
- (a) respond to requests for capacity-building by member States;
 - (b) expand the work on food loss and waste and sustainable consumption and production, including circular economy as requested by the 69th Commission.
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