



Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
5 September 2022

Original: English

Economic Commission for Europe

Steering Committee on Trade Capacity and Standards

Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards

Seventy-seventh session

Geneva, 14–16 (a.m.) November 2022

Item 13 of the provisional agenda

Programme of work of the Working Party for 2023

Programme of work of the Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards for 2023

Submitted by the secretariat

Summary

This document contains the programme of work of the Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards (WP.7) and its Specialized Sections on Standardization of Meat; Fresh Fruit and Vegetables; Dry and Dried Produce; and Seed Potatoes for 2023. It is based on the *Trade subprogramme's programme of work for 2023* (ECE/CTCS/2022/8) that was endorsed during the seventh session of the Steering Committee on Trade Capacity and Standards on 27 and 28 June 2022 and subsequent silence procedure.

This document is presented to the Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards for decision.

Proposed decision:

“The Working Party adopts the Programme of work of the Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards for 2023.”



I. Introduction

1. The Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards (hereinafter referred to as the Working Party), established by the Geneva Protocol¹/Geneva Understanding on Agricultural Quality Standards (1958. Rev. 1965, 1985 and 2015) and 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 subprogramme 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 objective, the strategy, the planned results and the deliverables in the programme of work correspond to those contained in the *Proposed programme budget for 2023* for ECE (A/77/6 (Sect. 20)) (see deliverables in Annex). The work of the subprogramme is aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The work is vested in and serviced by the Agricultural Quality Standards Unit, Market Access Section of the Economic Cooperation and Trade Division.

3. As per the Terms of Reference of the Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards (2018), contained in document ECE/CTCS/2019/12 endorsed by the Steering Committee on Trade Capacity and Standards at its fifth session, 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 (SDG 2, SDG 12);

(c) Collaboration – undertake capacity-building activities in cooperation with other public and private sector international bodies (in support of the previous two activities) (SDG 17).

4. As outlined in the Terms of Reference of the Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards (2018), 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). Moreover, in accordance with Rule 20 of the ECE Rules of Procedure,² the Working Party has established Working Procedures for its work, last revised in 2018.³

5. 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. 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.

¹ Geneva Protocol on Standardization of Fresh Fruit and Vegetables and Dry and Dried Fruit, since 2015 replaced and superseded by the Geneva Understanding on Agricultural Quality Standards.

² Terms of Reference and Rules of Procedure of the Economic Commission for Europe (E/ECE/778/Rev.6, 2006). Rule 20: “Subsidiary Bodies shall adopt their own rules of procedure unless otherwise decided by the Commission”.

³ For more information, see the Geneva Understanding on Agricultural Quality Standards, The Terms of Reference of the Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards (2018), and the Working Procedures available at: <https://unece.org/working-procedures-and-terms-reference>.

II. Draft programme of work of the Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards for 2023

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

6. During 2023, the Working Party will provide guidance on the priorities for future work identified by the Specialized Sections, including potential synergies and, 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 that the ECE agricultural quality standards remain relevant, continue to facilitate trade, while simultaneously supporting the achievement of SDGs.

B. Food security and sustainability: promote sustainable production and consumption of quality agricultural produce, including the prevention of food loss and waste

7. The Working Party has aligned its work with 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 supports directly SDG Target 12.3 on halving food loss by 2030.

8. In 2023, 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 chain participants, in products covered by the Specialized Sections, to prevent and avoid food loss and waste
- 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)

9. In 2023, the Working Party will undertake at least 6 days of capacity-building activities in collaboration with its Specialized Sections, subject to available resources. The Specialized Sections will do so in cooperation with relevant ECE partners, other international organizations, the private sector and civil society to work towards SDGs, foster linkages such as the internal ECE nexus approaches and achieve greater synergies, coherence and impact for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

III. Planned activities during 2023

A. Specialized Section on Standardization of Fresh Fruit and Vegetables

10. At its seventieth session, held on 16–18 May 2022, the Specialized Section on Standardization of Fresh Fruit and Vegetables decided to place the following items on its agenda for 2023:

- Development of a new standard for sweet potatoes
- Revisions to the standard for peas
- Revisions to the standard for onions
- Revisions to the standard for berry fruits
- Review of the recommendation for certain small fruits
- Pomegranates, discussion of suggested adjustments to interpretations in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development brochure on pomegranates
- Food loss and waste – review of 2–3 standards and the standard layout with a view to identify potential changes to further reduce food loss and waste

B. Specialized Section on Standardization of Dry and Dried Produce

11. At its sixty-ninth session, held on 15–17 June 2022, the Specialized Section on Standardization of Dry and Dried Produce decided to place the following items on its agenda for 2023:

- Inshell pecans, review of recommendation for potential adoption as a standard
- Pecan kernels, review of recommendation for potential adoption as a standard
- Finalization of the explanatory poster on almond kernels
- Alignment of existing standards with the revised Standard Layout for UNECE Standards on Dry and Dried Produce tabled for adoption by the Working Party in 2022
- Sampling plan workshops
- Development of a Code of Good Practice for dry and dried produce, for food loss and waste reduction (SDG 12)
- ECE/OECD study on impact of dry and dried produce standards on trade
- Capacity-building events to improve the capacity to use standards and carry out inspections, including for countries in Central Asia

C. Specialized Section on Standardization of Seed Potatoes

12. At its forty-ninth session, held on 17–18 March 2022, the Specialized Section on Standardization of Seed Potatoes decided to place the following items on its agenda for 2023:

- Revision of the entire ECE Standard S-1 concerning the marketing and commercial quality control of for seed potatoes
- Finalization of the draft guide on minituber production
- Capacity-building:
 - (a) development of an online webinar series
 - (b) knowledge-sharing and resource reference page

- (c) poster on the benefits of certified seed; update of the ECE seed potato website)
- Discussions/information sharing on:
 - (a) Lot size and sample size of seed potatoes
 - (b) Dormant tuber testing for viruses
 - (c) True Potato Seed (TPS) and potato plants in pots
 - (d) New and emerging diseases and pests – information on Liberibacter and the Tomato Potato Psyllid
 - (e) The potato mop top virus – sharing experiences
- Development of a position paper on herbicide carry-over and seed potatoes
- Revision of existing Specialized Section position papers

D. Specialized Section on Standardization of Meat

13. At its 2022 session, to be held on 28–30 September 2022, the Specialized Section on Standardization of Meat will be discussing the mapping of the ECE cut codes to the Harmonized Commodity Description and Coding System (HS) codes, along with discussions on marbling assessment, fat content in meat, and eating quality. It will also hold a seminar on Sustainable Meat and Livestock Production. The work on HS code alignment is expected to continue in 2023, along with the work to revise standards, and potential follow-up work related to sustainability of meat and livestock production.

E. Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards

14. As decided at its previous session, the 2022 session of the Working Party includes a roundtable to exchange experiences on food loss and waste work. The Working Party will also discuss and agree on its future activities to be prioritized, including in support of guidance and policy advice for food loss and waste reduction, as well as potential activities in support of the theme of the 2023 session of ECE “Digital and green transformations for sustainable development in the ECE region”.

IV. Additional resources being sought

15. If additional resources can be secured, the Working Party will:
- (a) respond to requests for capacity-building by member States, and expand online learning resources,
 - (b) expand the work on food loss and waste and sustainable consumption and production, as appropriate.

Annex

Deliverables to be implemented in 2023

1. The mandate of the Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards (WP.7) and its Specialized Sections provide the legislative framework for its deliverables. The table below lists all deliverables, by category and subcategory, for the year 2023 that are expected to contribute to the attainment of the objective of WP.7 stated above. This table is an excerpt from the table of deliverables for 2023 for the subprogramme 6 Trade as contained in the *Proposed programme budget for 2023* for ECE (A/77/6 (Sect. 20)).

2. The deliverables of the subprogramme fall into the following main categories: (a) facilitation of the intergovernmental process and expert groups; (b) generation and transfer of knowledge, including technical cooperation projects, training events, seminars, workshops, and publications; (c) other substantive deliverables; and (d) communication deliverables.

<i>Deliverables</i>	<i>2023</i>
---------------------	-------------

planned

Quantified deliverables

A. Facilitation of the intergovernmental process and expert bodies

Parliamentary documentation (number of documents)

3. Documentation for the Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards 60

Substantive services for meetings (number of three-hour meetings)

7. 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)

12. Project on food loss reduction in agriculture supply chains 1

Seminars, workshops and training events (number of days)

13. 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

Technical materials (number of materials)

23. Standards 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

Fact-finding, monitoring missions: Fact-finding missions 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: press releases for the subprogramme for regional access, publication launching events and articles in external newsletters intended for government officials and experts working on trade.

Digital platforms and multimedia content: update and maintenance of the subprogramme's website containing knowledge resources and instruments.