



---

**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****Seventy-first session**

Geneva, 9–11 May 2023

Item 9 of the provisional agenda

**Terms of Reference and Working Procedures  
of the Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards  
and its Specialized Sections****Initial proposals for revisions to the Terms of Reference of  
the Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards –  
comparison to the 2018 version****Submitted by the secretariat***Summary*

As per its Terms of Reference, the Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards shall review its Terms of Reference every five years and submit them for approval to the Steering Committee on Trade Capacity and Standards and the Executive Committee of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe. With the next revision due for consideration at its 2023 meeting, at its meeting in November 2022 the Working Party decided to set up an open working group consisting of Brazil, Poland, Spain, and the United States of America to review the Terms of Reference and Working Procedures and prepare a proposal for consideration by the Working Party at its seventy-eighth session in November 2023.

The first meeting of the open working group was held on 28 February 2023, and included participation of the delegation of Germany. The current document includes the initial proposed revisions discussed at the first meeting of the open working group, [as well as additional changes proposed by delegations attending the Specialized Section on Standardization of Fresh Fruit and Vegetables](#).

## Terms of Reference

1. Mission Statement: The Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards develops, interprets and promotes the application of internationally agreed commercial quality standards for meat and eggs, seed potatoes, fresh fruit and vegetables, and ~~for~~ dry and dried produce (~~dried fruits and nuts~~). ~~It also develops and explanatory~~ guidance for ~~the~~ agricultural produce standards to facilitate national and international trade of agricultural products. ~~The Working Party takes account of the needs of Governments and the private sector to deliver the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.~~

2. The Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards (hereinafter referred to as WP.7), acting within the framework of the mandates and policies of the United Nations and the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), and subject to the general supervision of the UNECE Steering Committee on Trade Capacity and Standards, is entrusted with the implementation of the work under the UNECE Trade Sub-programme covering agricultural quality standards, related guidance material, training, ~~and~~ sustainable production and consumption patterns for an inclusive economic growth, ~~as well as~~ promotion of greater uptake of international standards by countries in order to enable the implementation of internationally harmonized regulatory processes.

3. ~~In order to contribute to the~~ ~~The Working Party considers the needs of Governments and the private sector to deliver the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the WP.7 considers the needs of governments, the private sector and consumers. Its~~ ~~The~~ activities of WP.7 along with those of ~~and~~ its Specialized Sections contribute directly to the United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the 2030 ~~and its~~ Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). ~~The~~ WP.7 normative work being primarily of ~~is a~~ primarily technical in nature ~~and~~ complements those of its member countries. ~~[Some of] WP.7 work is carried out~~ undertaken ~~and carried out~~ in partnership with ~~[policy related work undertaken by]~~ other ~~[policy and standard-setting]~~ international bodies, where appropriate.

34. The aim of its work is to develop:

- Market transparency – define a common trading language, with minimum quality requirements for agricultural produce that facilitate fair and sustainable trade, ~~prevent~~ ~~reduce~~ technical barriers to trade and contribute to economic growth [SDG 8];
- Food security – ~~Promote~~ ~~promote~~ the sustainable production, ~~trade~~, and consumption of quality agricultural produce, including ~~practices to the prevention of~~ ~~and/or~~ ~~reduce~~ food loss (~~and waste~~) [SDG 2, 12]; and
- Collaboration – undertake capacity building activities in cooperation with other public and private sector international bodies (in support of the previous two activities) [SDG 17]

45. 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).

56. ~~The Working Party~~ ~~is open for~~ participation ~~is open to~~ by all United Nations member ~~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).

67. ~~In addition, representatives from~~ ~~r~~ Relevant international organizations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and the private sector, can also be invited as observers ~~[granted observer status]~~, in compliance with the ~~respective relevant~~ United Nations rules and practices ~~in this respect~~.

78. The Working Party defines its working procedures and those of its Specialized Sections.

89. The Working Party shall:

- 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 (~~dried~~ ~~fruits and nuts~~); seed potatoes; meat; and eggs. ~~The Working Party may~~ ~~develops~~

standards ~~and may develop explanatory guidance~~; on request from ~~member~~ countries; ~~. However, for other agricultural products, some of this work may be subjected~~ to the availability of resources.

- Revise and amend existing standards to reflect changing production, trading and marketing conditions, taking SDG targets into consideration.
- Undertake activities to harmonize the international application of its standards by developing and disseminating interpretative and guidance material.
- 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.
- Undertake training activities targeted at public and private sector to support sustainable development of agricultural production and trade.
- Promote uniform quality-control procedures, ~~including and~~ the use of a common the model quality conformity certificate ~~through the Specialized Sections and~~ in cooperation with governmental, inter-governmental and other organizations implementing standards to achieve uniformity of inspection methods and comparability of results.
- Cooperate with other international organizations and standard-setting bodies that develop and interpret agricultural quality standards for trade facilitation and consumer protection, such as relevant commodity committees of the Codex Alimentarius Commission ~~(Codex)~~, and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development ~~(OECD)~~ Scheme for the Application of International Standards for Fruit and Vegetables ~~(OECD F&V Scheme)~~, to avoid duplication of work and divergence in standards and their interpretation. Ensure that the standard-setting process is consistent with relevant international rules such as those by ~~from~~ the World Trade Organization ~~(WTO)~~ and the International Plant Protection Convention ~~(IPPC)~~.
- Facilitate communication between private and public stakeholder organizations with an interest in the agricultural standards, thereby providing for the best and modern trade practices in the standard development process that facilitates a basis for transparent transparency, along with fair and sustainable trade.

910. The Working Party shall review its Terms of Reference every five years and submit it ~~to~~ for approval to the Steering Committee on Trade Capacity and Standards and the Executive Committee of ~~the~~ UNECE.