



Economic Commission for Europe

Steering Committee on Trade Capacity and Standards

Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards

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Item 3 of the provisional agenda

**Terms of Reference and Working Procedures
of the Working Party**

**Revised Terms of Reference of the Working Party on
Agricultural Quality Standards – comparison to the 2018
version**

Submitted by the secretariat

Summary

This document was prepared to facilitate the review of the proposed changes to the Terms of Reference (ECE/CTCS/WP.7/2023/3). The document shows in track-change the proposed revisions discussed by the open working group as well as additional changes proposed by the Specialized Section on Standardization of Fresh Fruit and Vegetables on 9–11 May 2023.

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 ~~and. It also develops explanatory guidance material 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 Subprogrammesubprogramme~~ covering agricultural quality standards, related guidance material, training ~~and~~, sustainable production and consumption patterns for an inclusive economic growth. ~~The activities, as well as promotion of WP.7 and its Specialized Sections contribute directly to the United Nations Agenda 2030 and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The work being primarily greater uptake of a technical nature complements and is carried out in partnership with policy related work undertaken by other international bodies. standards by countries in order to enable the implementation of internationally harmonized regulatory processes.~~

~~33. In order to contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), WP.7 considers the needs of Governments, the private sector and consumers. Its activities along with those of its Specialized Sections contribute directly to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and SDGs. The normative work of WP.7 is primarily technical in nature and complements that of its member countries. WP.7 work is undertaken and carried out in partnership with other policy- and standard-setting international bodies, where appropriate.~~

4. 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 the sustainable production, trade, and consumption of quality agricultural produce, including ~~the prevention of~~practices to prevent 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) (E/2013/37-E/ECE/1464, Annex III, Appendix III).~~

~~56. The Working Party is open for participation by all UN-memberUnited 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).~~

~~6. In addition, representatives from relevant 7. Relevant international organizations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and the private sector, can also be invited as observers, in compliance with the UNrelevant 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 develops standards and may develop ~~standards, explanatory guidance~~ on request from member countries, for other agricultural products. ~~However, some of this work may be~~ subject 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~~sectors to support sustainable development of agricultural production and trade.
- Promote uniform quality-control procedures ~~and, including~~ the use of ~~the model~~ common quality conformity certificate ~~through the Specialized Sections and~~ in cooperation with governmental, ~~inter-governmental~~intergovernmental 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, and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (~~OECD~~) Scheme for the Application of International Standards for Fruit and Vegetables, 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 ~~from those by~~ 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 ~~standards to provide a basis for transparent~~agricultural standards, thereby providing for the best and modern trade practices in the standard development process that facilitates transparency along with fair and sustainable trade.

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