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Economic Commission for Europe

Steering Committee on Trade Capacity and Standards

Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards

Seventy-eighth session

Geneva, 13–15 November 2023

Item 1 of the provisional agenda

Adoption of the agenda

Revised annotated provisional agenda*

I. Provisional agenda

1. Adoption of the agenda.
2. Matters arising since the last session:
 - (a) Recent developments in the United Nations, the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe and its subsidiary bodies;
 - (b) Recent developments in other organizations.
3. Terms of Reference and Working Procedures of the Working Party.
4. Use and impact of the agricultural quality standards and links to legislative frameworks.
5. Specialized Section on Standardization of Fresh Fruit and Vegetables.
6. Specialized Section on Standardization of Dry and Dried Produce.
7. Specialized Section on Standardization of Seed Potatoes.
8. Specialized Section on Standardization of Meat.
9. Capacity-building and promotional activities.
10. Sustainable food systems and resource efficiency:
 - (a) Food loss and waste prevention and reduction;
 - (b) Digital and green transformations for sustainable development.
11. Future work.
12. Programme of work of the Working Party for 2024.

* Documents for the meeting will be made available at <https://unece.org/trade/wp7/wp7-78th-2023>. Delegates attending the meeting are required to register online at <https://indico.un.org/e/wp7/78th-2023>. In the event of difficulties with electronic registration, please contact the secretariat by e-mail (nilsesm@un.org).



13. Other business.
14. Election of officers.
15. Adoption of the report.

II. Annotations

1. Adoption of the agenda

The Working Party will adopt the agenda.

Documentation: Annotated provisional agenda (ECE/CTCS/WP.7/2023/1)
Revised annotated provisional agenda
(ECE/CTCS/WP.7/2023/1/Rev.1)

2. Matters arising since the last session

(a) Recent developments in the United Nations, the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe and its subsidiary bodies

The secretariat will present recent developments in the United Nations system, the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) and the Steering Committee on Trade Capacity and Standards (SCTCS) having an impact on the work of the Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards (WP.7).

(b) Recent developments in other organizations

Representatives of other organizations active in the area of agricultural quality standards will provide information about their activities.

3. Terms of Reference and Working Procedures of the Working Party

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 SCTCS and the Executive Committee of ECE.

The current Terms of Reference of the Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards were adopted by the Working Party through an intersessional procedure in 2019, endorsed by SCTCS at its fifth session on 28 and 29 May 2019 and approved by the Executive Committee on 8 July 2019 (ECE/EX/2019/L.7, EXCOM/CONCLU/106).

To prepare for the five-yearly review, in November 2022 the Working Party decided to set up an open working group to review the Terms of Reference and Working Procedures and prepare a proposal for consideration by the Working Party at its seventy-eighth session. The open working group met online to review the documents and discuss potential changes. In line with the suggestion of the open working group, the Terms of Reference and Working Procedures were also placed on the agenda of all Specialized Section meetings in 2023 to invite the input of participating delegations.

The Working Party is invited to consider the proposed revised Terms of Reference and Working Procedures resulting from this process.

Documentation: Revised Terms of Reference of the Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards (ECE/CTCS/WP.7/2023/3)
Revised Working Procedures for the Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards (ECE/CTCS/WP.7/2023/4)

Revised Terms of Reference of the Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards – comparison to the 2018 version (ECE/CTCS/WP.7/2023/INF.1)

Revised Working Procedures for the Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards – comparison to the 2018 version (ECE/CTCS/WP.7/2023/INF.2)

4. Use and impact of the agricultural quality standards and links to legislative frameworks

As part of its efforts to further document the use and impact of ECE standards, in early 2023 the secretariat in cooperation with the WP.7 Bureau launched a survey on the application of ECE standards and their link to relevant legislative frameworks in participating countries.

The Working Party is invited to discuss the findings of the survey. It is also invited to provide suggestions for additional surveys and analysis to assess and document the impact of the standards.

Documentation: Survey findings (ECE/CTCS/WP.7/2023/5)

5. Specialized Section on Standardization of Fresh Fruit and Vegetables

In 2023, the Specialized Section held one regular session as well as several online meetings of the rapporteur's group working to develop a standard for sweet potatoes, and of the working group set up to review selected ECE standards from a food loss and waste perspective.

The Specialized Section submitted the following documents for adoption by the Working Party:

Documentation: Report of the seventy-first session of the Specialized Section on Standardization of Fresh Fruit and Vegetables (ECE/CTCS/WP.7/GE.1/2023/2)

Standard for certain small fruits (ECE/CTCS/WP.7/2023/6)

Standard for sweet potatoes (ECE/CTCS/WP.7/2023/7)

Revised standard for asparagus (ECE/CTCS/WP.7/2023/8)

Revised standard for broccoli (ECE/CTCS/WP.7/2023/9)

Revised standard for kiwifruit (ECE/CTCS/WP.7/2023/10)

Revised standard for onions (ECE/CTCS/WP.7/2023/11)

Revised standard for peas (ECE/CTCS/WP.7/2023/12)

Revised standard for sweet chestnuts (ECE/CTCS/WP.7/2023/13)

Revised Minimum Quality Specifications for Fresh Fruit and Vegetables (ECE/CTCS/WP.7/2023/14)

Revised Standard layout for United Nations Economic Commission for Europe standards on fresh fruit and vegetables (ECE/CTCS/WP.7/2023/15)

6. Specialized Section on Standardization of Dry and Dried Produce

In 2023, the Specialized Section held one regular session. The Specialized Section submitted the following documents for adoption by the Working Party:

Documentation: Report of the seventieth session of the Specialized Section on Standardization of Dry and Dried Produce (ECE/CTCS/WP.7/GE.2/2023/2)

Standard for inshell pecans (ECE/CTCS/WP.7/2023/16)

Standard for pecan kernels (ECE/CTCS/WP.7/2023/17)

Revised standard for cashew kernels (ECE/CTCS/WP.7/2023/19)

Explanatory material for cashew kernels (ECE/CTCS/WP.7/2023/22)

7. Specialized Section on Standardization of Seed Potatoes

In 2023, the Specialized Section held one regular session and several meetings of the rapporteur's group working on reviewing the standard for seed potatoes.

The Specialized Section submitted the following documents for adoption by the Working Party:

Documentation: Report of the fiftieth session of the Specialized Section on Standardization of Seed Potatoes (ECE/CTCS/WP.7/GE.6/2023/2)

Revised position papers of the Specialized Section on Standardization of Seed Potatoes (ECE/CTCS/WP.7/2023/23)

8. Specialized Section on Standardization of Meat

In 2023, the Specialized Section held one regular session, which included an international seminar on sustainability, and several meetings of the rapporteur's group on revisions to the standard for bovine meat – carcasses and cuts, and the informal group discussing the potential scope of proposed future work on digitalization of meat standards.

The Specialized Section submitted the following documents for adoption by the Working Party:

Documentation: Report of the thirty-first session of the Specialized Section on Standardization of Meat (ECE/CTCS/WP.7/GE.11/2023/2)

Revised standard for bovine meat – carcasses and cuts (ECE/CTCS/WP.7/2023/24)

Revised standard for bovine meat – carcasses and cuts – comparison with earlier version (ECE/CTCS/WP.7/2023/INF.3)

9. Capacity-building and promotional activities

Delegations are invited to report on capacity-building and promotional work over the past year, inform of upcoming events and trainings as well as available e-learning and other resources for capacity-building.

Delegations are also invited to present their needs for capacity-building on the implementation and use of standards, and on food loss and waste reduction. The Working Party will discuss how it might assist in addressing these needs drawing on its experience and potential extrabudgetary funding.

10. Sustainable food systems and resource efficiency

The United Nations Food Systems Summit, held in 2021, emphasized the importance of adopting a food systems approach for implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). To realize SDGs and deliver healthy and nutritious diets for all, the global food system needs to become more productive, inclusive, environmentally sustainable, and resilient.

The Regional Preparatory Meeting in Europe and Central Asia held on 28 March 2023 ahead of the United Nations Food Systems Summit Stocktaking Moment (UNFSS+2) held on 24–26 July 2023, emphasized that food loss and waste was a priority in the region, and noted the need to better leverage trade to support food systems transformation. It also noted the importance of adopting a “One Health” approach to sustainably balance and optimize the health of people, animals and ecosystems, of estimating the true cost of food, and of ensuring consumer education and nutrition literacy.

Following the Stocktaking moment, this agenda item will consist of a seminar/roundtable focused on two aspects of sustainable food systems: food loss and waste prevention and reduction, and the role of digitalization in ensuring sustainable trade.

(a) Food loss and waste prevention and reduction

Over the past few years, the Working Party has strengthened its focus on prevention of food loss and waste in support of SDG Target 12.3 on halving food loss by 2030. The work has included the organization of awareness-raising events and the tools and guidance documents, including the UNECE Code of Good Practice, and the UNECE food loss and waste measuring methodology for fresh produce supply chains.

In the European Union, as part of the European Green Deal, the European Commission has recently proposed legally binding objectives for food waste reduction, the adoption of which will likely further drive progress on this important topic.

This agenda item will consist of a high-level roundtable on food loss and waste, including a discussion on potential future work of the Working Party on food loss and waste prevention and reduction and other trade-related aspects of sustainable food systems.

Documentation: Code of Good Practice: Reducing food loss and ensuring optimum handling of fresh fruit and vegetables along the value chain (ECE/TRADE/470)

Simply Measuring – Quantifying Food Loss & Waste: UNECE food loss and waste measuring methodology for fresh produce supply chains (ECE/TRADE/453)

Circularity in agri-food (ECE/CTCS/WP.7/2023/INF.4)

(b) Digital and green transformations for sustainable development

On 18 and 19 April 2023, the seventieth session of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe was held on the theme “Digital and green transformations for sustainable development in the ECE region”. It requested that the relevant Sectoral Committees and bodies reporting directly to the Executive Committee, and their subsidiaries “consider how to enhance the impact of relevant existing ECE instruments, in order to foster digital and green transformations, including by proposing ways to identify, assess and fill gaps in governance and good practices”. It invited these subsidiary bodies to replicate and scale up existing approaches that facilitate broad and effective use of the appropriate instruments, including through capacity-building and knowledge-sharing activities. It also invited subsidiary bodies to consider developing proposals in their respective programmes of work, including possible collaboration across subprogrammes, for impactful and measurable solutions that promote digital and green transformations and that can facilitate attaining the objectives of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

In response to this, the 2023 session of the Specialized Section on Standardization of Fresh Fruit and Vegetables included an agenda item with presentations by UN/CEFACT experts on ongoing work in the agricultural domain and related areas and a discussion on the digitalization of agricultural trade processes.

In line with the Commission decision, under this agenda item the Working Party will discuss the role of digitalization in ensuring efficient agricultural trade, with a focus on the needs and current solutions for national inspection bodies, and potential future work of the Working Party in this regard.

11. Future work

The Working Party will decide on its future work.

12. Programme of work of the Working Party for 2024

The secretariat will present the Working Party's draft annual programme of work for 2024, which is based on the programme of work of SCTCS and related decisions.

The Working Party will be invited to adopt the programme of work and recommend it to SCTCS for endorsement.

Documentation: Programme of work of the Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards for 2024 (ECE/CTCS/WP.7/2023/25)

13. Other business

Delegations will be invited to take up other issues not previously addressed during the session.

14. Election of officers

The Working Party will elect a Chair and one or two Vice-Chair(s) for a one-year term.

15. Adoption of the report

The Working Party will adopt the report of the seventy-eighth session of the Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards.

Documentation: Report of the seventy-eighth session of the Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards (ECE/CTCS/WP.7/2023/2).

III. Tentative timetable

Monday, 13 November	10:00–13:00	Informal meetings
	15:00–18:00	Items 1 to 5
Tuesday, 14 November	10:00–13:00	Items 6 to 9
	15:00–18:00	Item 10 (seminar/roundtable)
Wednesday, 15 November	10:00–13:00	Items 11 to 14
	15:00–18:00	Item 15
