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## Economic Commission for Europe

Steering Committee on Trade Capacity and Standards

Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards

Specialized Section on Standardization  
of Dry and Dried Produce  
Seventieth session

Geneva, 14–16 June 2023

### Report of the seventieth session of the Specialized Section on Standardization of Dry and Dried Produce

#### I. Introduction

1. The seventieth session of the Specialized Section on Standardization of Dry and Dried Produce was chaired by Mr. Dorian LaFond (United States of America). The session was held in-person, with the possibility of remote connection through an online channel available in English language.
2. Ms. Elisabeth Türk, Director of the Economic Cooperation and Trade Division of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) welcomed delegates to the seventieth session of the Specialized Section, expressing her gratitude to delegates for their work and support. She recalled the long-standing nature of the ECE work on agricultural quality standards, which had been started in 1949 with the establishment of the Working Party on Standardization of Perishable Foodstuffs. Initially focused on fresh produce, the first ECE standards on dry and dried produce were adopted in 1970.
3. She noted the continued relevance of the work, including for countries in Central Asia, which are important producers of dry and dried produce and the concrete trade and development impact of the standards. She highlighted the importance of the agenda items discussed at the meeting, including on the revisions to the standard on cashew kernels – the third most traded tree nut globally, after almonds and walnuts – as well as the finalization of standards for inshell pecans and pecan kernels.

#### II. Attendance

4. Representatives of the following countries attended the meeting: Germany, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russian Federation, Spain, Sri Lanka, Tajikistan, Türkiye, United States of America, Uzbekistan.
5. Representatives of the European Commission participated in the session.
6. Representatives of the following intergovernmental organizations participated in the session: the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Scheme for the Application of International Standards for Fruit and Vegetables; and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).



7. Representatives from the following non-governmental organizations, academia, business associations and private sector entities also attended: Almond Board of California; Association of Cashew Processors of Côte d'Ivoire, Association of Fruit and Vegetable Enterprises of Kyrgyzstan; Central Asian Working Group to Promote Exports of Agricultural Produce (CAWG); Hilfswerk International; International Nut and Dried Fruit Council (INC); Kazakh Research Institute of Fruit & Vegetable Growing; Kazakhstan Association of Sugar, Food and Processing Industries; Metro cash and carry, Kazakhstan; Perlim Noix, France; Quality Management Center, Tajikistan; Waren-Verein der Hamburger Börse e.V., Germany; World Macadamia Organisation.

### **III. Adoption of the agenda (agenda item 1)**

8. The Specialized Section adopted the revised annotated provisional agenda (ECE/CTCS/WP.7/GE.2/2023/1/Rev.1).

9. Due to the technical nature of the meeting, the Specialized Section agreed to allow interventions by delegations participating online to be reflected in the report of the session.

### **IV. Matters arising since the last session (agenda item 2)**

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

10. The Director of the Economic Cooperation and Trade Division of ECE informed of recent and forthcoming intergovernmental meetings and other matters of relevance to the work of the Specialized Section. Since the last meeting of the Specialized Section, the Steering Committee on Trade Capacity and Standards had met on 27 and 28 June 2022, and the seventy-seventh session of the Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards had been held on 14–16 November 2022. The Working Party had adopted three new standards for dry and dried produce (dried persimmons, raw and roasted inshell peanuts, raw and roasted peanut kernels), changes to the standard layout for dry and dried produce, one new recommendation and four revised standards for fresh fruit and vegetables, as well as the reports of the 2022 sessions of the four Specialized Sections (ECE/CTCS/WP.7/2022/2).

11. She drew attention to the seventieth session of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, which had been held on 18 and 19 April 2023 under the theme “Digital and green transformations for sustainable development in the region of the Economic Commission for Europe”, envisaged to shape the work of UNECE’s normative machinery and technical assistance pillars. Prior to that, on 28 March 2023 a regional preparatory meeting for the 2023 Food Systems Stocktaking Moment had been held in collaboration with the United Nations Food Systems Coordination Hub and the Issue-based Coalition on Sustainable Food Systems, of which ECE is a member, followed by the Regional Forum on Sustainable Development on 29 and 30 March 2023.

12. Looking ahead, the upcoming meeting of the Steering Committee on Trade Capacity and Standards will be held on 26 and 27 June 2023, and the Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards on 13–15 November 2023.

#### **(b) Recent developments in other organizations**

13. The Specialized Section received an update from the representative of OECD, who stressed the importance of disseminating the Working Party standards beyond the ECE region, and reiterated willingness of OECD to support capacity-building activities and work on standards and impact of climate change on produce. He extended an open invitation to a forthcoming meeting in Brazil which would discuss challenges faced by the industry. He said he looks forward to continuing the excellent collaboration with the secretariat and delegations.

14. The Specialized Section received an update from the European Commission on the revision of European Union (EU) marketing standards. The Commission had recently notified third countries of the draft regulations on marketing standards for fruit and vegetables as foreseen by the Agreement on Technical Barriers to Trade of the World Trade Organization.

15. The European Commission also informed about the ongoing activities related to the re-evaluation of sulphur dioxide–sulphite by the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA). The intervention on this matter is summarized under section XI of the present report, as it was provided in relation to agenda item 9.

16. The Specialized Section received an update from INC which represents 926 members from 86 countries, with its membership accounting for over 85 per cent of global commercial trade in nuts and dried fruit. INC had recently held its annual congress, which had discussed the state of the industry, market developments, latest findings in health and nut allergy research, and sustainable growth of the industry. INC also briefed on its promotion strategy, targeting “generation Z” as well as the markets of China and India. Finally, it provided an overview of trends and statistics for the global production and trade of nuts and dried fruit.

17. The Specialized Section received an update from CAWG which is an informal international association of public and private sector stakeholders from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan tasked with promoting the exports of agricultural produce from the Central Asian countries. CAWG had held its sixth regular meeting in Tashkent in April 2022, as well as two regional online meetings of the national technical groups, which carry out the tasks assigned by CAWG. As a result of these meetings, a number of posters have been developed (dried persimmons, sweet apricot kernels, dried melons, inshell peanuts, and peanut kernels) for the purpose of field information sessions, training, and workshops with producer groups in Central Asia. CAWG also decided to focus on two main areas of its activities: a) seminars and training for producers, primary processors, and exporters; b) develop a pre-export inspection service. For this purpose, CAWG had approached the ECE Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards to jointly organize training on inspections. A call was also made for more support through technical assistance and capacity-building work.

18. The Specialized Section received an update from the World Macadamia Organisation (WMO) which had been established in 2021 as an independent, non-for-profit body based in Singapore, focused on promoting macadamia nuts globally and stimulate growth in existing and non-tapped markets. WMO is a member of INC. In 2022, it had finalized the WMO Macadamia Product Standard.

## **V. Impact of agricultural quality standards on trade (agenda item 3)**

19. The ECE secretariat reported on the preliminary results of the survey launched in consultation with the Working Party Bureau to document the use of ECE standards and their link to relevant legislative frameworks in participating countries (ECE/CTCS/WP.7/GE.2/2023/INF.1).

20. The Specialized Section took note of the summary of the survey findings. It decided to set up a small group, consisting of the United States, INC, OECD and the secretariat, to discuss how to further document the impact of the standards.

## **VI. Capacity-building and promotional activities (agenda item 4)**

21. The secretariat introduced plans to conduct capacity-building in Central Asia in the autumn of 2023 with UNDP and Hilfswerk International. It further informed that the online course on agricultural quality standards and food loss reduction in fresh produce supply chains was available online since July 2022.

22. The coordinator of CAWG informed of the plans to conduct a capacity-building training on dry and dried produce in October 2023 in Tashkent. As requested by CAWG members, the training would cover the following products: dried apples, walnut kernels, and prunes. The training would be organized jointly by ECE, UNDP (Aid for Trade project), and Hilfswerk International. CAWG expressed gratitude to ECE, UNDP, Hilfswerk International and delegations for their support, and called on development partners and donors to provide additional support to enable expanding technical assistance and capacity-building activities.

23. The representative of INC offered to support capacity-building, including by approaching its members in Türkiye to provide experts, and offering the use of the INC facilities in Spain.

24. The representative of OECD reiterated its offer to support capacity-building, specifically funding the participation of an expert trainer and providing material for trainings.

## **VII. Sustainable Development Goal 12 and sustainable food systems (agenda item 5)**

### **(a) Food loss and waste prevention related to standards**

25. At the 2022 session of the Specialized Section, an ad-hoc drafting group was set up to discuss the development of guidelines for reducing food loss and waste in nuts and dried fruit value chains, similar to the ECE Code of Good Practice for fresh fruit and vegetables. The group, consisting of the United States, CAWG, INC, and Perlim Noix, has not yet started its work.

26. As the intention was to build on existing materials by industry, the Specialized Section was invited to provide information about existing guidelines and resources that the ad-hoc drafting group could build on for its work.

27. The Specialized Section agreed to work on such material over the coming year. The representatives of the United States, CAWG, INC and Perlim Noix reconfirmed their willingness to be involved in the drafting group, with INC offering to take the lead.

### **(b) Climate change – impacts on nuts and dried fruit quality**

28. The representative of INC gave a presentation on impacts of climate change on the quality and production of nuts and dried fruit. Last year drought and heavy rains had brought quality issues, such as shrunken kernels, and losses of fresh fruit which impacted fruit supply. The devastating earthquake in Türkiye and Syria and the subsequent heavy rains had also affected the apricot-producing region of Malatya in Türkiye, collapsing the supply chain for four months. Climate change may impact nuts and dried fruit production through mycotoxin contamination, nut/fruit size, flavour and aroma, nutritional composition (drop fat content), and allergenic potential. Solutions to address the issue included knowledge and capacity-building, improved pest and disease management, adaptation measures, policy support and market incentives. Advances in the nut and dried fruit sector included development of new varieties, spatial mapping of orchards to map and increase water use efficiency, digitalization and smart technologies for optimizing fertilizer and pesticide use, and water saving irrigation solutions such as microirrigation, subdripping, or demand-based irrigation.

29. Ensuing discussions highlighted: the challenge of competing objectives, including that consumers want less use of chemical inputs but still visually attractive and long-lasting produce; the importance of climate change, noting that it has a link to quality through the production process; and the importance of measures taken to be realistic and adapted to the financial means of farmers. Collaboration with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations to link work on production impacts with the work on the standards was proposed.

## **VIII. Development of new standards (agenda item 6)**

### **(a) Inshell pecans**

30. The Specialized Section reviewed the recommendation for inshell pecans which had been adopted by the Working Party at its 2020 session for a one-year trial period, and for which the trial period had been extended for another year at the 2021 and 2022 sessions of the Working Party (ECE/CTCS/WP.7/2022/13).

31. The Specialized Section reviewed the recommendation section by section. The secretariat suggested to remove the reference to “insect/mite/parasite damage” in the list item referring to mould filaments under minimum requirements, as those words appeared to have been copied into an earlier version of the recommendation by mistake. The Specialized Section agreed to the removal of that reference.

32. The Specialized Section agreed to submit the recommendation for inshell pecans with the above revisions to the Working Party for adoption at its 2023 session as a new ECE standard for inshell pecans. The delegation of the United States expressed its reservation due to the ongoing work to finalize its domestic standard. To allow the work to move forward, it requested the Specialized Section to agree to revise the standard in less than three years if deemed necessary once its domestic standard had been completed, to which the Specialized Section agreed.

### **(b) Pecan kernels**

33. The Specialized Section reviewed the recommendation for pecan kernels which had been adopted by the Working Party at its 2020 session for a one-year trial period and for which the trial period had been extended for another year at the 2021 and 2022 sessions of the Working Party (ECE/CTCS/WP.7/2022/14).

34. The Specialized Section reviewed the recommendation section by section. It removed square brackets and agreed to keep the tolerance for pieces less than 1/2 kernel at 5 per cent for Class II for whole kernels.

35. The Specialized Section agreed to submit the recommendation for pecan kernels with the above revisions to the Working Party for adoption at its 2023 session as a new ECE standard for pecan kernels. The delegation of the United States expressed its reservation due to the ongoing work to finalize its domestic standard. To allow the work to move forward, it requested the Specialized Section to agree to revise the standard in less than three years if deemed necessary once its domestic standard had been completed, to which the Specialized Section agreed.

## **IX. Review of existing standards (agenda item 7)**

### **(a) Cashew kernels**

36. The Specialized Section reviewed the changes to the standard for cashew kernels discussed at the 2022 session of the Specialized Section (ECE/CTCS/WP.7/GE.2/2023/3) along with the proposal from Germany to add a definition to clarify the term “superficial damage” (ECE/CTCS/WP.7/GE.2/2023/4).

37. The Specialized Section discussed what constitutes superficial damage and how to define it, including whether it referred to knife cuts, mechanical cuts, or also other damages. As superficial damages could be more than knife cuts or mechanical damage, it agreed to rephrase the proposed footnote in the table of tolerances to read “damages on the surface of the kernels not exceeding an area of 8 mm<sup>2</sup> and a depth of 2 mm”.

38. During the review of the explanatory poster for cashew kernels, the Specialized Section also found that additional specifications for measurement should be added in the

provision for spots under minimum requirements, to read “free from spots in aggregate in excess of 3 mm in diameter or 7 mm<sup>2</sup> on the kernels”.

39. The Specialized Section agreed to amend the standard for cashew kernels accordingly and to submit the revised text to the Working Party for adoption at its 2023 session.

**(b) Raw and roasted peanut kernels**

40. The Specialized Section reviewed the proposal by the delegation of Germany to increase the tolerances for split and broken halves in the standard for raw and roasted peanut kernels (ECE/CTCS/WP.7/GE.2/2023/5).

41. The delegation of the United States raised concerns, noting that the tolerance in relation to split and broken halves referred to whole raw kernels while the justification for the revision referred to blanched kernels. The delegation of the United States also expressed concern about removing the reference to seed coat in the table for tolerances.

42. The Specialized Section agreed that Germany would rewrite the proposal after the session. The secretariat would help circulate the revised proposal, to facilitate consultation ahead of the 2024 session to which the proposal will be submitted.

**(c) Alignment of standards with the revised standard layout**

43. The secretariat informed that following the 2022 revision of the standard layout for ECE standards on dry and dried produce adopted by the Working Party, existing standards would need to be revised in line with the revised standard layout (i.e. a revision of layout and standard text and not in substance). However, since such a general alignment had not been done for most of the standards on dry and dried produce after earlier changes to the standard layout (2008, 2009, 2011, 2020), and some standards dated back to 2007, this work would require time as a thorough review was needed. The secretariat invited the Specialized Section to discuss the process and timeline and to consider whether a dedicated working group would be needed to review the changes.

44. The Specialized Section discussed the process and timeline for the alignment. It agreed that the Bureau would review the editorial changes done by the secretariat to align with the consecutive revisions to the standard layout. The work would start from the older and more commonly used standards (see section XIV. Future work), and the resulting revised versions would be submitted to the 2024 session of the Specialized Section for final review.

## **X. Explanatory materials (agenda item 8)**

**(a) Explanatory material developed by the Central Asian Working Group to Promote Exports of Agricultural Produce**

45. The coordinator of CAWG introduced the explanatory posters which had been developed by CAWG to help producing groups and small companies. The Specialized Section reviewed the explanatory posters for dried melons, dried persimmons, inshell peanuts and peanut kernels developed by CAWG (ECE/CTCS/WP.7/GE.2/2023/6, ECE/CTCS/WP.7/GE.2/2023/INF.7, ECE/CTCS/WP.7/GE.2/2023/INF.8, ECE/CTCS/WP.7/GE.2/2023/INF.9, ECE/CTCS/WP.7/GE.2/2023/INF.10). It also considered the potential development of explanatory materials for those products under the aegis of the Working Party.

46. The Specialized Section provided several proposals for editorial changes to the four posters, as well as proposals for changes to the photos depicting the damages to better highlight defects. It also proposed to consider having separate posters for raw and roasted peanuts, alternatively to include for each defect one photo showing the defect on raw peanuts and the other on roasted peanuts. The delegation of Germany noted that the standard on raw and roasted peanut kernels also apply to splits and blanched kernels and thus the poster should

reflect that or clearly say it is not included. It also suggested depicting discolouration for dried persimmons. The use of a filter for the photos was proposed to improve visibility and sharpness.

47. The delegation of the United States informed that the American Peanut Council and the global peanut industry would like to join CAWG in the work to finalize the posters for raw and roasted inshell peanuts and raw and roasted peanut kernels.

48. The Specialized Section agreed that CAWG would work to improve the explanatory posters, in the case of peanuts with the American Peanut Council and the global peanut industry, and to submit the revised explanatory posters to the 2024 session of the Specialized Section for consideration for adoption as ECE explanatory posters.

#### **(b) Explanatory material for cashew kernels**

49. The Specialized Section reviewed the draft poster for cashew kernels (ECE/CTCS/WP.7/GE.2/2023/INF.2) which had been brought back for review along with the cashew standard for discussion.

50. The Specialized Section decided to bring the measurements for pieces from the separate text box into each respective picture heading. It also discussed the description of butts to include in the poster and settled on “either end of a whole kernel which has been broken crosswise”. It further agreed to change the picture for superficial damage, with INC agreeing to provide an alternative photo. Finally, it agreed to remove the top nut from the picture on spotted and to adjust the footnote on spotted, as well as the provision on spots under minimum requirements in the standard, to say “Brown and other coloured spots that contrast with the kernel colour in excess of 3 mm in diameter or 7 mm<sup>2</sup>”.

51. The Specialized Section agreed to finalize the poster through an intersessional process once the new photo had been received, and then submit it to the Working Party for approval at its 2023 session.

#### **(c) Explanatory material for almond kernels**

52. The Specialized Section reviewed the draft poster for almond kernels (ECE/CTCS/WP.7/GE.2/2023/INF.3). The draft had been discussed at its 2022 session, which had proposed several changes to it, including better depiction of splits, descriptions of large pieces, and some changes to the photos. The revised draft poster had been submitted by the delegation of the United States for consideration of the Specialized Section.

53. The Specialized Section agreed to remove the measurements that had been added in the draft poster for pieces. For the depiction of gummy and brown spots, it decided to add an area measure to the proposed diameter measure. It also agreed to add provisions for gummy and brown spots under minimum requirements in the standard, to read “free from gummy covering an area greater than 6 mm in diameter or 28 mm<sup>2</sup>” and “free from brown spot covering an area greater than 3 mm in diameter or 7 mm<sup>2</sup>”.

54. The Specialized Section agreed to send the proposed changes to the standard for almond kernels along with the draft explanatory poster for intersessional approval before submitting it to the Working Party for approval at its 2023 session.

### **XI. Sulphur dioxide content in dried apricots (agenda item 9)**

55. The Specialized Section discussed comments provided by the delegation of Türkiye and by INC regarding sulphur dioxide content in dried apricots (ECE/CTCS/WP.7/GE.2/2023/INF.5 and ECE/CTCS/WP.7/GE.2/2023/INF.6) in relation to the reclassification process under the Classification Labelling and Packaging Regulation (1272/2008) in the European Union, and the information provided by the European Commission on this matter through an intervention under agenda item 2 (b).

56. The representative of the European Commission, speaking during agenda item 2 (b), informed that in November 2022, the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA), which is the risk assessment body within the EU, published a scientific opinion on the follow-up to the re-evaluation of sulphur dioxide and sulphites as food additives. EFSA had concluded that the available toxicity database was inadequate to derive an Acceptable Daily Intake (ADI), and thus withdrew the temporary ADI which was in place. Instead, they used a margin-of-exposure approach which was considered appropriate to assess the risk for these food additives. EFSA also concluded that several of the calculated margin-of-exposure values raised safety concerns. The European Commission had recently initiated a discussion on the risk management follow-up to be given to this EFSA opinion. This work is done within the activities of the Working Party of Governmental Experts on Additives, a working group of the Standing Committee on Plants, Animals, Food, and Feed. EFSA had recommended in this new opinion to explore the technological need to maintain the authorizations for calcium sulphite and calcium bisulphite on the positive list of authorized food additives. In addition, no technical data were submitted on the presence of toxic elements by business operators for these two food additives and potassium bisulphite. It has also been noted that for many authorised uses, no use levels were submitted by interested business operators during the call for data. The Commission will perform a targeted stakeholder consultation, launched later in June, to collect feedback on whether there is interest that the use of calcium sulphite, calcium bisulphite and potassium bisulphite remains authorised within the EU and whether there is interest that the use of sulphur dioxide-sulphites (E 220-228) as food additives remains authorised for uses for which no actual use levels have been submitted. When feedback from the consultation has been received, it will initiate a discussion on the revision of the use levels within Regulation (EC) No 1333/2008 as well as a revision of the specifications for these food additives in Regulation (EU) 231/2012. It also informed that it had already received, proactively, information from some stakeholders regarding the technological need for the use of these food additives in dried fruits.

57. The delegation of Türkiye expressed strong concern with the proposal, highlighting that for some products this would have a major impact, since for example 80 per cent of dried apricots are treated with sulphur dioxide. Türkiye stated that it believes that available toxicity data is insufficient to support the conclusion by EFSA. It also noted that sulphites have some specific properties (preservative and antioxidant properties) and that there are no viable alternatives. It argued that lowering maximum levels for sulphur dioxide in dried fruits (i) may be detrimental to achieving other safety benefits such as prevention of microbial and pest incidences in dried fruit producing countries, and (ii) would trigger substantial economic losses, major trade disruptions along the food chain and cause unemployment in the producing countries, while it would not necessarily contribute to the better protection of the health of the European consumers. The delegation of Türkiye thus argued that the maximum level for sulphur dioxide in dried apricots should be maintained as 2,000 ppm, which is the regulated level currently laid down in European Union Regulations and also in Codex Alimentarius Standards.

58. The delegation of INC provided a presentation on the topic, highlighting the same concerns. INC argued that sulphur dioxide is essential in the production and marketing of some types of dried fruits, dried apricots being the most prominent example, and that there currently are no viable alternatives to sulphites that can achieve the same results. Sulphites are used to prevent spoilage, inhibiting the growth of microorganisms such as bacteria and mould, limiting the risk of ochratoxin A contamination, extend the shelf life of dried fruits, and to preserve the natural colour of the fruit. It noted that Türkiye is the source of 52 per cent of global production of dried apricots, and that a change in the maximum residue limits may affect the quantity shipped into EU as 80 per cent comes from Türkiye. It further argued that consumers are not used to seeing brown dried apricots, and that there are no substitutes that can match the effectiveness of sulphur dioxide in preventing spoilage, extending shelf life and retaining colour. It noted that according to EFSA, dried fruits are not the main contributors to SO<sub>2</sub> exposure for the majority of the population, and that according to its calculations the estimated consumption of apricots is on average 0.46 g/year/person based on the assumption that 25 per cent of the population in the top five EU consuming countries are regular consumers. It thus concluded that any reduction in the maximum limit (currently set

at 2,000 ppm) would have an impact on the availability of dried apricots in the EU market, without achieving the intended purpose.

59. The delegation of the United States expressed similar concern as the delegation of Türkiye and INC stating that the proposed changes are unwarranted and do not help in protecting the health of consumers or in trade facilitation.

60. The Specialized Section had a rich discussion on the issue with several delegations bringing their respective perspectives to the table. Noting the very specific and focused normative mandate of the Specialized Section as well as its broader role as a platform for exchange among delegations, the Specialized Section agreed to reflect the views expressed in the report of the meeting and that it would be up to each individual country and organization to bring its views to the attention of the European Commission.

## **XII. Harmonized System codes relevant to the work of the Specialized Section (agenda item 10)**

61. At the 2022 meeting of the Working Party, the delegation of Brazil suggested discussing the Harmonized Commodity Description and Coding System (HS) developed by the World Customs Organization (WCO) and the difficulty to access data at the product level as fresh and dried fruit fall under the same HS code. The Working Party agreed that this issue could be brought for discussion in Specialized Sections.

62. The secretariat briefed on discussions in the Specialized Section on Standardization of Fresh Fruit and Vegetables in May 2023, to which the delegation of Brazil had submitted a document arguing for the need for better data through having detailed HS codes for fruit and vegetables and separate HS codes for dried and fresh fruit. The representative of WCO had informed the Specialized Section on Fresh Fruit and Vegetables about the five-year review cycle for HS codes, and the limited time left for submitting proposals for consideration within the current cycle. According to established procedures, proposals for revisions can be submitted to the Review Sub-Committee (RSC) by all Contracting Parties to the Harmonized System Convention. RSC would hold the last meeting of this cycle in November 2023, with changes considered for approval by the Harmonized System Committee in March 2024 and final approval by the Council in June 2024. The resulting revised nomenclature would enter into force on 1 January 2027.

63. The representative of INC strongly emphasized the need for detailed data for both production and intertrade, and the importance of distinct HS codes in this regard. The Chairperson highlighted the need for detailed data for assessing the need to e.g. develop a new standard and thus the need for specific HS codes.

## **XIII. Terms of Reference and Working Procedures of the Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards and its Specialized Sections (agenda item 11)**

64. The secretariat informed about the progress of the work of the open working group, set up by the Working Party to review and propose revisions to the Terms of Reference and Working Procedures. The open working group, consisting of Brazil, Poland, Spain, and the United States, had met once and provided initial suggestions for revisions to the Terms of Reference, as contained in document ECE/CTCS/WP.7/GE.2/2023/INF.4. Additional suggestions had been provided by the Specialized Section on Standardization of Fresh Fruit and Vegetables (ECE/CTCS/WP.7/GE.1/2023/INF.2/Rev.1). Delegations were invited to provide their views on the Terms of Reference and the Working Procedures as input to the open working group which will submit its proposals for changes to the Working Party for consideration at its 2023 meeting.

65. The delegation of Germany expressed its support for the changes proposed by the open working group and the additional changes proposed by the Specialized Section on

Standardization of Fresh Fruit and Vegetables. Delegations were invited to provide additional proposals in writing to the secretariat by 30 June 2023.

#### **XIV. Future work (agenda item 12)**

66. The coordinator of CAWG informed that at the latest meeting of the CAWG it had agreed to propose to the Specialized Section on Standardization of Dry and Dried Produce to develop a standard for dried rosehip. Rosehip, whole fruit or pieces, is traded in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan, and currently only national and Commonwealth of Independent States standards exist, but no international standards.

67. The Specialized Section decided to place the following items on the agenda for 2024:

- Development of a draft standard on whole dried rosehip
- Finalization of explanatory posters proposed and developed by CAWG (dried persimmons, dried melons, raw and roasted inshell peanuts, raw and roasted peanut kernels), for adoption as ECE posters
- Alignment of existing standards with the standard layout, starting with the most used older standards (almonds (inshell and blanched kernels), hazelnuts (inshell and kernels), macadamia nuts (inshell and kernels), dried tomatoes)
- Code of Good Practice for food loss and waste reduction in dry and dried produce (working group led by INC and including United States, CAWG, and Perlim Noix)
- Capacity-building in Central Asia in response to the request from CAWG, with Hilfswerk International and UNDP, and in Valencia, Spain with INC
- Ad hoc working group to discuss how to further document the impact of the standards (United States, INC, OECD and the secretariat).

68. Any other proposals for future work should be sent to the secretariat by 15 January 2024.

69. The Chairperson informed that the provisional dates for the seventy-first session of the Specialized Section are 12–14 June 2024.

#### **XV. Other business (agenda item 13)**

70. The coordinator of CAWG informed that the upcoming seventh meeting of CAWG would take place in Almaty, Kazakhstan in October 2023. Delegations were invited to join the meeting.

71. The Chairperson raised the issue of how to increase participation and ensure participants coming to the meetings in person. Ideas discussed included adding field trips and product testing and sampling, as well as to rotate the meetings between countries. The secretariat informed that the requirement for official meetings to have simultaneous interpretation into the three ECE official languages provided limitations, as did the lack of travel funds. However, the secretariat would discuss with the Bureau on how to increase in-person participation in the meetings.

#### **XVI. Election of officers (agenda item 14)**

72. The Specialized Section elected Mr. Dorian LaFond (United States of America) as its Chairperson and Mr. Sebastian Winkel (Germany) and Mr. Umed Aslanov (CAWG) as its Vice-Chairpersons for a one-year period.

**XVII. Adoption of the report (agenda item 15)**

73. The Specialized Section reviewed the report of its seventieth session (ECE/CTCS/WP.7/GE.2/2023/2) and agreed to circulate it to delegations for review and subsequent approval in accordance with paragraph 21 of Appendix III of document E/2013/37-E/ECE/1464 (Guidelines on procedures and practices for ECE bodies), with the aim to publish it within two weeks.

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