



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

Sixty-ninth session

Geneva, 15-17 June 2022

Report of the sixty-ninth session of the Specialized Section on Standardization of Dry and Dried Produce**I. Introduction**

1. The sixty-ninth session of the Specialized Section on Standardization of Dry and Dried Produce was convened in a hybrid format, in Geneva and online, with simultaneous interpretation into English, French and Russian. The meeting was chaired by Mr. Dorian LaFond (United States of America). The Chair thanked all delegations for their involvement and expressed hope to return to physical meetings soon.
2. The Director of the Economic Cooperation and Trade Division of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) opened the session welcoming the delegates and highlighting the importance of the agricultural quality standards in ensuring efficient trade and in reducing food loss along supply chains, thus contributing to sustainable food systems and resource efficient and circular economies. She noted that recent studies had shown the positive contribution of plant-based diet in addressing the twin issues of environmental sustainability and health. She highlighted the importance of dry fruits and nuts for sustainable and healthy diets (richness in potassium, antioxidant capacities, prevention of cardio-vascular diseases) and the resilience of dry and dried produce to disruptions in supply chains, emphasizing the importance of the work of the Specialized Section
3. She expressed her gratitude to the delegates for their work and support as well as progress made despite the COVID-19 crisis and wished them successful deliberations.

II. Attendance

4. Representatives of the following countries attended the meeting: France, Germany, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Kyrgyzstan, South Africa, Tajikistan, Türkiye, the United States of America, and Uzbekistan.
5. The European Commission was represented.
6. The Joint Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) / World Health Organization (WHO) Food Standards Programme (Codex Secretariat) was represented.
7. 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), Kyrgyzstan.

8. Representatives from the following observer organizations, non-governmental organizations, associations and private sector entities also attended: Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ); Hilfswerk International; International Nut and Dried Fruit Council (INC); Iran Pistachio Association; Perlim Noix; and Quality Management Center.

III. Adoption of the agenda

9. The delegations adopted the provisional agenda (ECE/CTCS/WP.7/GE.2/2022/1), with a change in the timing of the discussion of agenda items 4 and 10.

IV. Matters arising since the last session

(a) United Nations, United Nations Economic Commission for Europe and subsidiary bodies

10. The Director of the Economic Cooperation and Trade Division of ECE provided an overview of the achievements of the Specialized Section over the past years, and of recent and forthcoming inter-governmental meetings and other matters of relevance to the work of the Specialized Section.

11. Since the last meeting of the Specialized Section, the Steering Committee on Trade Capacity and Standards had met on 21-22 June 2021, and the seventy-sixth session of the Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards (WP.7) on 15-17 November 2021. The United Nations Food Systems Summit had been held on 23 September 2021. In preparation for the Food Systems Summit, ECE and the four other regional commissions of the United Nations had produced a joint policy brief highlighting the role of regional cooperation in food systems transformation. In collaboration with FAO and other members of the Issue-based Coalition on Sustainable Food System a follow-up discussion on food systems was also held 6 April 2022 as a side-event to the Regional Forum on Sustainable Development for the ECE region.

12. The Steering Committee on Trade Capacity and Standards will be held on 27-28 June 2022; and the Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards on 14-16 November 2022. The e-learning course on agricultural quality standards and food loss that had been developed under a United Nations Development Account project will be finalized by the end of June 2022. She invited delegates to reflect on possible contributions to "Digital and green transformations for sustainable development in the ECE region", the theme for the 70th session of the Commission Session to be held in 2023.

13. The Chair commended the WP.7 secretariat on its work, turning out a high volume of outputs with small staffing, and expressed gratitude for reports and deliverables.

(b) Recent developments in other organizations

14. The Specialized Section took note of the update from the European Commission, particularly on EU marketing standards. The Commission is currently conducting an impact assessment of the marketing standards, focusing on the alignment with the Lisbon Treaty, the Green Deal, and the Farm to Fork Strategy. In the second half of 2022 it will do further work on the related legislative texts, which will then be presented to EU Member States. Alignment to ECE standards will be implemented after the conclusion of the impact assessment.

15. The Specialized Section took note of the update provided by the representative of the Central Asian Working Group (CAWG), which works to promote ECE commercial quality standards in Central Asia and covers Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. The CAWG had held a four-day seminar in Tashkent, Uzbekistan in November 2021 on

standards and commercial rules for dried fruit and vegetables and had held another meeting in April 2021. More information would be shared in the pre-station under the item on capacity building.

16. The Specialized Section took note of the update from the Codex Secretariat of the Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Programme regarding the work of relevant Codex committees dealing with dry produce, namely the Codex Committee on Processed Fruit and Vegetables and the Codex Committee on Spices and Culinary Herbs. The former had been adjourned sine die in 2020, while the latter was active and had completed the elaboration of the standards for dried oregano, dehydrated ginger, dried cloves, and dried basil which were subsequently adopted by the Codex Alimentarius Commission in 2021. Similarly, the Codex Committee on Cereals, Pluses and Legumes had also been adjourned. The Codex Alimentarius Commission will be meeting in November/December 2022. More information can be found on the Codex website.

17. The Specialized Section took note of the update from the International Nut and Dried Fruit Council (INC), which represents 900 companies in over 80 countries, involved in over 80% of commercial farm gate value of the trade in nuts and dried fruit. This year the INC had reinforced its commitment to working on sustainability issues and created a roadmap of action towards achievement of the SDGs in the sector, focusing on SDGs 2, 6, 12, 13 and 15. It also reported that reforestation is an important area for INC, and stressed that it looks forward to the continued collaboration with international organizations, including ECE and FAO.

18. The Specialized Section took note of the update provided by the representative of the OECD, including the development of guidelines on pandemics and trade disruptive events; development of new brochures on root vegetables, green bananas, and passion fruit (already processed); and brochures on berry fruits, cauliflower, and papayas (to be finalized next year).

V. Preparations for the seventieth session of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe

19. The Director of the Economic Cooperation and Trade Division informed that in December 2021 the Executive Committee of the Economic Commission for Europe had decided that the cross-cutting theme of the seventieth session of the Commission, to be held in 2023, will be “Digital and green transformations for sustainable development in the ECE region”. The Executive Committee invited relevant subsidiary bodies of ECE and the secretariat to consider how they may contribute, as appropriate, to this cross-cutting theme within their respective mandates, ongoing work and existing resources.

20. The Specialized Section took note of the invitation to consider potential contributions, action items, and draft proposals related to this theme. The United States delegate suggested that exhibitions were a good way to show the work of the Specialized Section, and that it had contributed to several such exhibitions in the past, organized in collaboration with the ECE secretariat.

VI. Analysis of the impact of agricultural quality standards on the trade of produce

21. The representative of OECD informed about progress made on the joint OECD/ECE study on the impact of agricultural quality standards on the trade of fruit and vegetables (CE/CTCS/WP.7/GE.2/2022/INF.1). The objective of the study was to examine the importance of standards in facilitating trade.

22. The analysis suggests that, of the 39 categories of fresh fruit and vegetables considered, implementation of ECE standards and publication of OECD fruit and vegetable explanatory brochures are associated with substantial increases in international trade across multiple product categories. A regression analysis of individual products finds conclusive evidence that trade in various types of fresh fruits and vegetables increases, in general, in the

post-publication and/or post-revision period. The study also showed that trade in the products were higher between countries who had adopted the standards than with other countries. Some caveats exist, notably in terms of data limitations, which limit the type of analysis that can be made. The study is planned to be finalized and made public in the next few months.

23. The representative of OECD offered to collaborate on a similar analysis for dry and dried produce in the coming year and encouraged countries to help with detailed data on the product level as this was not easy to attain and as long time-series were needed to reflect the state before and after the introduction of a standard.

24. The representative of the INC provided an overview of trends and patterns in the global trade of nuts and dried fruits. He noted that trade in nuts had grown a lot and expressed appreciation for the ECE work on developing standards for nuts and dried fruit, emphasizing the importance of the standards in facilitating trade. For de-shelled tree nuts and in-shell pistachios, United States is the top exporter (in particular of almonds, pistachios and walnuts), followed by Vietnam (cashews), Türkiye (hazelnuts), Iran (pistachios), and Spain (almonds). On the importing side the EU tops the list, with nearly half of the imports, followed by China, the United States, Canada and Japan. As regards in-shell tree nuts, the majority of exports consist of in-shell cashews exported from western Africa, mainly for processing in (and re-exportation from) Vietnam and India. The United States is the second largest exporter, primarily consisting of inshell almonds sent to China and India, and inshell walnuts sent to Türkiye and the EU.

25. He highlighted the importance of this trade for the local economy, with many families working in processing. He informed that INC had launched a large campaign promoting the benefits of nuts for human health. Finally, he highlighted the importance of the ECE standards as they gather all requirements in one place which is essential for international trade.

26. The Specialized Section commended the ECE/OECD study and looked forward to its finalization. It welcomed the proposal of the OECD secretariat to work on a similar study for dry and dried produce next year and decided to include it in the list of future work for consideration of the Working Party. The Specialized Section also thanked INC for its support, highlighting the importance of industry participation in the work on the impact of standards on trade.

VII. Capacity-building and promotional activities

27. The secretariat informed that an online workshop on sustainable walnut quality had been held on 7-8 September 2021 under a Development Account Project, targeting Central Asia. It provided an overview of the upcoming online training on quality standards and food loss and waste that will be made available on the ECE website by the end of June 2022.

28. The delegate of the United States noted the usefulness of such a training and suggested expanding it to encompass the products covered by all four Specialized Sections, including on dry and dried produce.

29. The representative of the CAWG shared the history of the group which had been created in 2015 at the request of industry to support integration of the Central Asian region in global trade. Its aim is to improve understanding and the application of internationally recognized commercial standards developed by ECE by local businesses, governments and experts. CAWG expressed gratefulness to experts from Germany, Türkiye, and the United States for their support in sharing knowledge, and to the Secretariat for facilitating the transfer of this knowledge. A regional meeting of the group takes place annually, with the last meeting held on 6 April 2022. Since its inception, the CAWG has developed many promotional materials in local languages and provided training on application of the standards for producer groups, farmers, processor associations, exporters, and state agencies in the region (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan). Since more than 62 % of employees in food processing SMEs are women, involved in graduation, calibration, and packaging, the trainings had had a positive impact on women. He asked for further support

in implementing capacity-building and awareness raising activities, including facilitation of communication with international experts to develop recommendations and training.

30. The delegation of Germany commended CAWG on its work and asked if its material existed in English. The CAWG representative replied that only some existed in English, and that additional posters developed in 2021-2022 would be translated into English and shared with the secretariat.

31. The representative of INC indicated its previous collaboration with the ECE in capacity building activities and expressed interest to continue the fruitful collaboration.

32. The secretariat informed that the Central Asian region was an important region for ECE, and a priority region for capacity building, including through the United Nations Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia (SPECA).

VIII. Revisions to the Standard Layout

33. The Specialized Section reviewed the proposal by the United States to amend the Standard Layout for UNECE Standards on Dry and Dried Produce (ECE/CTCS/WP.7/GE.2/2022/3).

34. The delegation of Germany supported the proposal. It also asked for a clarification of the provision under minimum requirements concerning “free from blemishes, areas of discolouration or spread stains in pronounced contrast with the rest of the shell affecting in aggregate more than ... per cent of the surface of the shell”.

35. The Specialized Section agreed to amend the Standard Layout for UNECE Standards on Dry and Dried Produce in line with the proposal presented by the United States, and to insert the word “no” after “in aggregate” to increase clarity of the provision. It decided to forward the revised text to the November 2022 session of the Working Party for approval. The Chair highlighted that the next review would be at the earliest in three years’ time, in line with the WP.7 Working Procedures.

IX. Development of new standards

(a) Dried persimmons

36. The Specialized Section reviewed the Recommendation for Dried Persimmons, adopted by the Working Party at its 2021 session as a new recommendation for a one-year trial period (ECE/CTCS/WP.7/2021/8), along with the proposal submitted by the delegation of Germany for changes to the provisions concerning tolerances (ECE/CTCS/WP.7/GE.2/2022/4), and additional proposals made in the meeting.

37. The Specialized Section agreed to include the proposed changes. It decided to submit the Recommendation for Dried Persimmons to the Working Party at its November 2022 session for adoption as a new ECE standard for dried persimmons.

(b) Raw and roasted inshell peanuts

38. The Specialized Section reviewed the Recommendation for Raw and Roasted Inshell Peanuts, which had been adopted by the Working Party at its 2021 session as a recommendation for a one-year trial period (ECE/CTCS/WP.7/2021/9). It also considered the proposal by the delegation of Germany for changes in the section on moisture content (ECE/CTCS/WP.7/GE.2/2022/5), and the proposal by the delegation of the United States to add a tolerance for cracked and broken in the provisions concerning tolerances (ECE/CTCS/WP.7/GE.2/2022/INF.4).

39. The Specialized Section agreed to include the proposed changes. It decided to submit the Recommendation for Raw and Roasted Inshell Peanuts to the Working Party at its

November 2022 session for adoption as a new ECE standard for raw and roasted inshell peanuts.

(c) Raw and roasted peanut kernels

40. The Specialized Section reviewed the Recommendation for Raw and Roasted Peanut Kernels, which had been adopted by the Working Party at its 2021 session as a recommendation for a one-year trial period (ECE/CTCS/WP.7/2021/10). It also considered the proposals for changes submitted by the delegation of Germany (ECE/CTCS/WP.7/GE.2/2022/6).

41. The Specialized Section agreed to include the proposed changes. It decided to submit the Recommendation for Raw and Roasted Peanut Kernels to the Working Party at its November 2022 session for adoption as a new ECE standard for raw and roasted peanut kernels.

(d) Inshell pecans

42. The Specialized Section reviewed the Recommendation for Inshell Pecans, which the Working Party in 2021 had approved to extend for an additional one-year trial period (ECE/CTCS/WP.7/2021/6).

43. The delegation of the United States informed that it is revising its national standards for inshell pecans and pecan kernels, and that it is still in the decision-making process. The delegation thus requested an extension of the trial period of one more year, while finalizing its standard.

44. Noting that this would be the third extension, which is unusual, it was suggested that if after one year it would not be ready, it would either be put it on hold or proceed to adoption.

45. The delegation of Germany informed that it was ready to support the adoption of both recommendations, but if some delegations needed more time, they were open for extending both recommendations by one year.

46. The Specialized Section decided to submit the Recommendation for Inshell Pecans to the Working Party at its November 2022 session for a one-year extension of the trial period.

(e) Pecan kernels

47. The Specialized Section reviewed the Recommendation for Pecans Kernels, which the Working Party in 2021 had approved to extend for an additional one-year trial period (ECE/CTCS/WP.7/2021/6).

48. The Specialized Section decided to submit the Recommendation for Pecan Kernels to the Working Party at its November 2022 session for a further one-year extension of the trial period.

X. Review of existing standards

Cashew kernels

49. At its 2021 session, the Specialized Section decided to postpone the proposed discussion on a revision of the standard for cashew kernels to its 2022 session. In preparation of the 2022 session, the existing standard for cashew kernels had been circulated by the INC to its members but had not received any suggestions for changes. Thus, there was no background document for this agenda item, other than the existing ECE Standard DDP-17 for Cashew Kernels (adopted in 2013, based on document ECE/TRADE/C/WP.7/2013/30).

50. It was noted that the draft poster, which had initially been discussed at the 2020 session of the Specialized Section, contained a footnote concerning “spotted” which was not aligned with the standard.

51. The Specialized Section discussed the alignment between the standard and the draft poster. The delegation of Germany highlighted the bullet under minimum requirements which needed clarification, as discussed in relation to the Standard Layout.

52. The Specialized Section decided to include a reference to spotted in the quality tolerances part of the standard, and to change the footnote of the poster to align it with the requirement of the standard, which stipulates that cashew kernels should be “free from spots in aggregate in excess of 3 mm on the kernels”. It also agreed to the proposal by Germany. It decided to submit the revised text to the Working Party at its November 2022 session for adoption as a revised ECE Standard for Cashew Kernels.

XI. Explanatory materials

(a) Cashew kernels

53. At its 2021 session, the Specialized Section agreed to postpone the finalization of the draft explanatory poster on cashew kernels (ECE/CTCS/WP.7/GE.2/2022/INF.2) until after the revision of the cashew kernel standard.

54. Following the discussion on alignment between the standard and the poster, held under the previous agenda item, the Specialized Section agreed to revise the footnote on pitted spots of the draft poster for cashew kernels in line with the standard, changing it to “brown and other coloured spots that contrasts with the kernel colour in aggregate in excess of 3 mm caused by pre-harvest attack on the kernel”, and to submit the revised poster to the Working Party at its November 2022 session for adoption.

(b) Almond kernels

55. At its 2021 session, the Specialized Section decided to prepare a draft almond kernel poster for the review of the Specialized Section at its 2022 session. The Specialized Section reviewed a draft poster for almond kernels submitted by the delegation of the United States.

56. The Specialized Section reviewed the draft poster, and proposed changes to it, including better depiction of splits, descriptions of what large pieces are, and some changes to the photos.

57. The Specialized Section decided to work on the changes during the coming year by a working group led by the United States and Germany and to submit the revised poster for consideration at the next session of the Specialized Section in June 2023.

XII. Sampling plan for tree nuts and dried produce and guidelines for inspections of dry and dried produce, and related workshops

58. Following the adoption of the text of the sampling plan for tree nuts and dried produce and guidelines for inspections of dry and dried produce at the 2021 session the Working Party (ECE/CTCS/WP.7/2021/14), the Specialized Section was invited to discuss the potential organization of sampling plan workshops, which had earlier been planned but not been possible to organize due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The aim of such workshops would be to showcase the sampling plan and to assist countries in building inspection capabilities.

59. Noting that the ECE sampling plan for tree nuts and dried produce and guidelines for inspections of dry and dried produce builds on the OECD methodology and sampling plan¹, the Chair invited the OECD secretariat to provide suggestions.

60. The representative of the OECD highlighted OECD's competence in inspection and offered OECDs support in helping in future trainings and with the publication of explanatory materials. Going forward, OECD would also ensure its participation in the meetings of the Specialized Section on Dry and Dried Produce, as well as to ensure to avoid overlaps between its events and ECE Specialized Section meetings, as had happened this week. He suggested to make the sampling plan guidelines a joint document, as this could increase its reach and dissemination and help align rules, and as a joint OECD/ECE sampling plan could help all actors.

61. The delegation of Germany supported the proposal to have a joint document and collaborate in the field of the sampling plan. The delegation of France also supported the proposal of having one common document between ECE and OECD, as it would provide for greater clarity between manufacturers and those who are monitoring the implementation of the standards. The delegation of the United States also supported making it a joint document. The Specialized Section concurred on making the sampling plan a joint document and requested the secretariat to work with the OECD secretariat to explore the legal implications.

62. As regards sampling plan workshops, the Chair recalled that the CAWG in its presentation under the item on capacity building had requested and expressed willingness to host a sampling plan workshop for members of the grouping, and that prior to the pandemic the delegation of Türkiye had envisioned a workshop in Izmir as a joint effort between Aegean Exports Union exporters and the Government.

63. The representative of INC highlighted that the sampling plan is becoming essential, and that countries need this kind of support, including in their own language, as educating industry can help avoid arbitration and rejection. He suggested that Izmir, Türkiye would be an ideal place and offered to discuss with colleagues. As an alternative, INC offered to host such a workshop at its headquarters in Reus, Spain, with the support of local processors and producers. He also suggested that capacity building for large exporting and importing countries outside the region, such as India and Vietnam, would be useful. The INC further emphasized the importance of the work of WP.7, highlighting its ability to involve countries worldwide in its standard-setting work.

64. The representative of Perlim Noix expressed interest in participating and contributing to sampling plan workshops.

65. The Specialized Section noted with appreciation the willingness of the OECD to help and share their resources with the Specialized Section in implementing its work. It recommended that the secretariat work with the bureau of the Specialized Section and key partners to identify dates and locations for capacity building workshops that would facilitate the participation of as many delegations as possible, including workshops for CAWG.

XIII. Sustainable Development Goal 12 and sustainable practices: food loss and waste prevention related to standards

66. The Specialized Section took note of the second edition of the Code of Good Practice – reducing food loss and ensuring optimum handling of fresh fruit and vegetables along the value chain, which had been finalized and presented to the Working Party at its 2021 session (ECE/CTCS/WP.7/GE.2/2022/INF.3). It discussed the possibility of developing similar guidelines for nuts and dried fruit.

¹ OECD operating rules for conformity checks of fruit and vegetables covered by a standard, contained in Annex II of OECD/LEGAL/0346 available at: <http://t4.oecd.org/agriculture/fruit-vegetables/publications/oecd-fruit-and-vegetables-rules.htm>

67. The delegation of the United States noted that each industry group has their own code of good practice and suggested building on such material. The INC stated that it would be very pleased to participate and contribute to the development of such guidelines.

68. The Specialized Section agreed to include the development of a guidance document like the Code in its list of future work. It decided to establish an ad-hoc drafting group consisting of the United States, INC, CAWG and Perlim Noix to further discuss the development of such guidelines, building on existing materials by industry, notably the INC. A message would be sent out inviting others to join the ad-hoc drafting group.

XIV. Other business

69. The CAWG expressed interest in developing a standard on mung beans. The Specialized Section advised to consult the Codex Secretariat, as it was within the mandate of the Codex Committee on Cereals, Pulses and Legumes.

XV. Future work

70. The Specialized Section decided to place the following items on the agenda for 2023:

- Inshell pecans
- Pecan kernels
- Finalization of the explanatory poster on almond kernels
- Alignment of existing standards with the Standard Layout
- Sampling plan workshops
- Code of Good Practice for dry and dried produce / food loss and waste reduction (SDG12)
- 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.

71. Any other proposals for future work should be sent to the secretariat as early as possible, preferably by 1 November 2022.

72. The secretariat informed that the provisional dates for the seventieth session of the Specialized Section are 14-16 June 2023, pending confirmation of conference services and translation services.

XVI. Election of officers

73. The Specialized Section elected Mr. Dorian LaFond (United States) as its Chair and Umed Aslanov (Central Asia Working Group) as its Vice-Chair for a one-year period.

XVII. Adoption of the report

74. The Specialized Section adopted the report of its sixty-ninth session (ECE/CTCS/WP.7/GE.2/2022/2) in session.