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## Economic Commission for Europe

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### Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards

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Item 4 of the provisional agenda

#### Specialized Section on Standardization of Fresh Fruit and Vegetables

## Revised standard for headed cabbages

Submitted by the secretariat

### *Summary*

The following document is submitted to the Working Party for adoption as the revised United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) standard FFV-09 concerning the marketing and commercial quality control of headed cabbages.

The document is based on the document ECE/CTCS/WP.7/2020/4, adopted by the Working Party at its seventy-sixth session in 2020 and through inter-sessional approval process. It includes modifications agreed at the seventy-second session of the Specialized Section on Standardization of Fresh Fruit and Vegetables (GE.1) in 2024, as contained in documents ECE/CTCS/WP.7/GE.1/2024/7 and ECE/CTCS/WP.7/GE.1/2024/2.



# UNECE standard FFV-09 concerning the marketing and commercial quality control of headed cabbages

## I. Definition of produce

This standard applies to headed cabbages of varieties (cultivars) grown from *Brassica oleracea* var. *capitata* L. (including red cabbages and pointed cabbages) and from *Brassica oleracea* var. *sabauda* L. (savoy cabbages) to be supplied fresh to the consumer, headed cabbages for industrial processing being excluded

## II. Provisions concerning quality

The purpose of the standard is to define the quality requirements for headed cabbages after preparation and packaging.

However, if applied at stages following export/dispatch, products may show in relation to the requirements of the standard:

- a slight lack of freshness and turgidity
- a slight deterioration due to their development and their tendency to perish.

The holder/seller of products may not display such products or offer them for sale, or deliver or market them in any manner other than in conformity with this standard. The holder/seller shall be responsible for observing such conformity.

### A. Minimum requirements

In all classes, subject to the special provisions for each class and the tolerances allowed, the headed cabbages must be:

- intact; however, headed cabbages may have some of their outer leaves removed
- sound; produce affected by rotting or deterioration such as to make it unfit for consumption is excluded
- clean, practically free of any visible foreign matter
- fresh in appearance
- practically free from pests
- practically free from damage caused by pests
- free of damage due to frost
- free of abnormal external moisture
- free of any foreign smell and/or taste.

The stem should be cut slightly below the lowest point of leaf growth; the leaves should remain firmly attached, and the cut should be clean.

The development and condition of the headed cabbages must be such as to enable them:

- to withstand transportation and handling
- to arrive in satisfactory condition at the place of destination.

### B. Classification

The headed cabbages are classified in two classes, as defined below:

**(i) Class I**

Headed cabbages in this class must be of good quality. They must be characteristic of the variety and/or commercial type.

According to the variety and/or commercial type, they must be compact and have firmly attached leaves and show no signs of floral stem.

Green Savoy cabbages and early cabbages must be properly trimmed, but a number of outer leaves may be left for protection.

The following slight defects, however, may be allowed, provided these do not affect the general appearance of the produce, the quality, the keeping quality and presentation in the package:

- small cracks in the outer leaves
- slight bruises
- light trimming of the outer leaves

**(ii) Class II**

This class includes headed cabbages that do not qualify for inclusion in Class I, but satisfy the minimum requirements specified above.

The following defects may be allowed, provided the headed cabbages retain their essential characteristics as regards the quality, the keeping quality and presentation:

- cracks in the outer leaves
- bruises
- trimming of the outer leaves
- less compact
- discolouration due to frost in case of white and savoy cabbages.

The total length of the stem and floral stem should not exceed two-thirds of the length of the head.

### **III. Provisions concerning sizing**

Size is determined by weight of the unit.

To ensure uniformity in size for produce in the same package, the weight of the heaviest head must not be more than double the weight of the lightest head. When the weight of the heaviest head is equal to or less than 2 kg the difference between the heaviest and the lightest head may be up to 1 kg.

Uniformity in size is compulsory for headed cabbages presented in packages.

The size requirements shall not apply to miniature produce<sup>1</sup>.

- 38 mm if sized by diameter
- 50 mm if sized by length
- 70 g if sized by weight.

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<sup>1</sup> Miniature product means a variety or cultivar of vegetable, obtained by plant breeding and/or special cultivation techniques, excluding specimens of non-miniature varieties which have not fully developed or are of inadequate size. All other requirements of the standard must be met.

## **IV. Provisions concerning tolerances**

At all marketing stages, tolerances in respect of quality and size shall be allowed in each lot for produce not satisfying the requirements of the class indicated <sup>2</sup>.

### **A. Quality tolerances**

#### **(i) Class I**

A total tolerance of 10 per cent, by number or weight, of headed cabbages not satisfying the requirements of the class but meeting those of Class II is allowed. Within this tolerance not more than 1 per cent in total may consist of produce satisfying neither the requirements of Class II quality nor the minimum requirements, or of produce affected by decay.

#### **(ii) Class II**

A total tolerance of 10 per cent, by number or weight, of headed cabbages satisfying neither the requirements of the class nor the minimum requirements is allowed. Within this tolerance not more than 2 per cent in total may consist of produce affected by decay.

### **B. Size tolerances**

For all classes (if sized): a total tolerance of 10 per cent, by number or weight, of headed cabbages not satisfying the requirements as regards sizing is allowed.

However, no head may weigh less than 300 g in the case of early cabbages and 400 g in the case of other cabbages.

## **V. Provisions concerning presentation**

### **A. Uniformity**

The contents of each package (or lot for produce presented in bulk in the transport vehicle), must be uniform and contain only headed cabbages of the same origin, variety or commercial type, quality, and size (if sized).

Headed cabbages in Class I must be uniform in shape and colour.

However, a mixture of headed cabbages of distinctly different commercial types and/or colours may be packed together in a package, provided they are uniform in quality and, for each commercial type and/or colour concerned, in origin. However, in case of those mixtures uniformity in size is not required.

Miniature headed cabbages must be reasonably uniform in size. They may be mixed with other miniature products of different species and origin.

The visible part of the contents of the package (or lot for produce presented in bulk in the transport vehicle) must be representative of the entire contents.

### **B. Packaging**

Headed cabbages must be packed in such a way as to protect the produce properly.

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<sup>2</sup> A conformity check shall be made by assessing primary or composite samples. It is based on the principle of presumption that the quality of the randomly taken samples is representative of the quality of the lot. The OECD Operating Rules for Conformity Checks are recommended for application – also by operators – at the stages of dispatch as well as in wholesale and distribution centres and storerooms of food retail.

The materials used inside the package must be clean and of a quality such as to avoid causing any external or internal damage to the produce. The use of materials, particularly of paper or stamps bearing trade specifications, is allowed, provided the printing or labelling has been done with non-toxic ink or glue.

Stickers individually affixed to the produce shall be such that, when removed, they neither leave visible traces of glue nor lead to skin defects. Information lasered on single fruit should not lead to flesh or skin defects.

Packages (or lots for produce presented in bulk in the transport vehicle) must be free of all foreign matter.

## VI. Provisions concerning marking

Each package<sup>3</sup> must bear the following particulars, in letters grouped on the same side, legibly and indelibly marked, and visible from the outside.

For headed cabbages transported in bulk (direct loading into a transport vehicle) these particulars must appear on a document accompanying the goods, and attached in a visible position inside the transport vehicle.

### A. Identification

Packer and/or dispatcher/exporter:

Name and physical address (e.g. street/city/region/postal code and, if different from the country of origin, the country) or a code mark officially recognized by the national authority<sup>4</sup> if the country applying such a system is listed in the UNECE Code Mark Registry<sup>5</sup>. In the case where there is no street address available, the physical address can be made up of the name of the farm or facility, the nearest village, town, region, and postal code; or GPS coordinates and a PO Box address together with nearest town, region and country shall be accepted as a physical address.<sup>6</sup>

### B. Nature of produce

- “White cabbage” etc., if the contents are not visible from the outside
- “Mixture of headed cabbages”, or equivalent denomination, in the case of a mixture of distinctly different commercial types and/or colours of headed cabbages. If the produce is not visible from the outside, the commercial types and/or colours and the quantity of each in the package must be indicated
- “Mini headed cabbages”, “baby headed cabbages”, or equivalent denomination, where appropriate.

<sup>3</sup> These marking provisions do not apply to sales packages presented in packages bearing these particulars. However, they do apply to sales packages (pre-packages) presented individually.

<sup>4</sup> The national legislation of a number of countries requires the explicit declaration of the name and address. However, in the case where a code mark is used, the reference “packer and/or dispatcher (or equivalent abbreviations)” has to be indicated in close connection with the code mark, and the code mark should be preceded by the ISO 3166 (alpha-2) country/area code of the recognizing country, if not the country of origin.

<sup>5</sup> See <http://www.unece.org/trade/agr/codemarkregistry.html>.

<sup>6</sup> Reservation by the United States of America on the use of a PO Box address, as it may not allow facility inspections or rapid intervention in case of recalls, and is not part of its national labelling requirement related to packer and/or dispatcher/exporter.

### **C. Origin of produce**

- Country of origin<sup>7</sup> and, optionally, district where grown, or national, regional or local place name
- In the case of a mixture of distinctly different commercial types and/or colours of headed cabbages of different origins, the indication of each country of origin shall appear next to the name of the commercial type and/or colour concerned
- In the case of a mixture of miniature produce of different species of different origins, the indication of each country of origin shall appear next to the name of the species concerned.

### **D. Commercial specifications**

- Class
- Number of units (optional).

### **E. Official control mark (optional)**

Adopted 1964

Last revised 2024

Aligned with the Standard Layout 2023

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<sup>7</sup> The full or a commonly used name should be indicated.