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COMMITTEE FOR TRADE, INDUSTRY AND
ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT

Working Party on Standardization of
Perishable Produce and Quality Development

Specialized Section on Co-ordination of
Standardization of Fresh Fruit and Vegetables
Forty-seventh session, 15 to 18 May 2001, Geneva

Item 2 of the Provisional Agenda

MATTERS OF INTEREST ARISING SINCE THE FORTY-SIXTH SESSION

Note by the secretariat

This document sums up the relevant outcome of fourth session of the Committee for Trade, Industry and Enterprise Development and the fifty-sixth session of the Working Party on Standardization of Perishable Produce and Quality Development.

FOURTH SESSION OF THE COMMITTEE FOR TRADE, INDUSTRY AND ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT

The following excerpt is taken from the report of the Committee (ECE/TRADE/262, paragraphs 32 to 39):

Item 6 - Agricultural quality standards

32. The secretariat introduced the activities of the Working Party on Standardization of Perishable Produce and Quality Development (WP.7) and gave an overview of the work carried out since the last session of the Committee. The Vice-Chairman of WP.7, Mr. David Priester, gave an in-depth explanation of the background and discussions in WP.7 on the elaboration of explanatory material.

33. At the third session of the Committee, the European Community had requested that the secretariat prepare a study on the modalities of preparing explanatory brochures for UN/ECE standards within the framework of WP.7 and its specialized sections. This request had been supported by the United States and agreed by the Committee.

34. The results of this study had shown that the work could be integrated without significantly increasing the number of meeting days but not without increasing existing resources. Specifically, an additional staff member would need to be employed. Because of the 0% growth budget of the UN/ECE this could only be achieved either through the creation of a trust fund with voluntary contributions from countries or through a reallocation of resources within the secretariat.

35. At its last session WP.7 decided to create an ad hoc group to look into this question, while stressing that there should be no duplication of work, i.e. WP.7 would be prepared to take on the preparation of explanatory material only if this work ceased to be done at the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

36. Both the delegation of the European Community and that of the United States indicated their interest in seeing this work transferred to the UN/ECE provided that work on explanatory material is discontinued at the OECD and the problem of funding the work at the UN/ECE is solved.

37. The delegation of the European Community stated that while it had taken note of the possibility of funding this activity *via* a trust fund, priority should be given to solving this problem by reallocating resources within the Trade Division. The Committee then **requested** that the secretariat report on possibilities for doing this and provide feedback to the Working Party at its next session in November 2000.

38. The delegation of the Russian Federation said that it placed high priority on the work of WP.7 and its specialized sections, especially Meat and Seed Potatoes. It welcomed the fact that the latter group would discuss genetically modified organisms in the future but requested that work already done by other bodies be taken into account in order to avoid any duplication of work.

39. The Committee then **noted** documents TRADE/2000/5 and TRADE/WP.7/1999/7, which contain further details of the work done by WP.7 during this period.

56TH SESSION OF THE WORKING PARTY ON STANDARDIZATION OF PERISHABLE PRODUCE AND QUALITY DEVELOPMENT.

Excerpt taken from TRADE/WP.7/2000/11, paras. 13-42 and 71-93:

Specialized Section on Coordination of Standardization of Fresh Fruit and Vegetables

Document for this session: TRADE/WP.7/GE.2/2000/25 (Report of the forty-sixth session)

13. The Vice-Chair of the Specialized Section, Dr. U. Bickelmann (Germany), informed the Working Party of the outcome of the forty-sixth session of the Specialized Section. She also thanked the French authorities for hosting the Working Group on Cultivated Mushrooms, the excellent organization and their hospitality.

Apples and Pears

Documents for this session: TRADE/WP.7/GE.1/2000/25/Add.1 (Main text of the standard)
TRADE/WP.7/2000/3 (Germany) (List of varieties)

14. The delegation of Poland lifted its reservation on minimum sizes.

15. The delegation of Germany introduced document TRADE/WP.7/2000/3 containing the existing list of varieties in a new format agreed by the Specialized Section. It was decided to annex it to the standard.

16. The Working Party adopted the proposed text as a revised UN/ECE Standard. It will be published as addendum 1 to this report.

Beans

Document for this session: TRADE/WP.7/GE.1/2000/25/Add.2

17. Corrections were pointed out concerning sections: II A., III., IV A (iii) and VI D.

18. The delegation of the Netherlands said that its industry had indicated problems with the provisions concerning rust spots in Class II. It felt that "practically free" was open to interpretations and it could happen that the Netherlands would not be able to deliver Beans at certain periods because of the rust spots caused by unfavourable weather conditions. It said it did not want to stop the standard now but would like to come back to that question at the next session of the Specialized Section.

19. The Working Party accepted this proposal.

20. The Working Party adopted the proposed text as amended as a revised UN/ECE Standard. It will be published as addendum 2 to this report.

Citrus Fruit

Document for this session: TRADE/WP.7/GE.1/2000/25/Add.3

21. The Chairman introduced the document and stressed that good progress had been made on the standard and that the compromise reached was a significant amelioration compared to the standard in force even though several reservations remained in the text concerning maturity requirements and green skinned oranges.

22. The Chairman asked whether the reservations could be placed in the report instead of the text of the standard but this was not agreed by the relevant countries.

23. Speaking as the delegate of Spain, the Chairman informed the group about the research being done in Spain on maturity requirements and taste for several varieties of clementines and oranges. He said that more detailed information would be provided to the meeting of the Specialized Section in 2001.

24. Corrections were pointed out concerning sections: I, II B. and III. A

25. Concerning section I, the delegation of France clarified that:

- “pomelo” in French corresponded to grapefruit in English and
- “pamplemouse” in French corresponded to “pummelo” or “shaddock” in English.

26. The Working Party adopted the proposed text as amended as a revised UN/ECE Standard. It will be published as addendum 3 to this report.

Cultivated Mushrooms

Document for this session: TRADE/WP.7/GE.1/2000/25/Add.4

27. Corrections were pointed out concerning sections: IV. B. and V A.

28. The Working Party adopted the proposed text as amended as a revised UN/ECE Standard. It will be published as addendum 4 to this report.

Peas

Document for this session: TRADE/WP.7/GE.1/2000/25/Add.5

29. A correction was pointed out concerning section II A.

30. The Working Party adopted the proposed text as amended as a revised UN/ECE Standard. It will be published as addendum 5 to this report.

Table Grapes

Document for this session: TRADE/WP.7/GE.1/2000/25/Add.6

31. The delegation of the Russian Federation said that the minimum sugar content as an important maturity indicator was missing in the standard. The Chairman clarified that a working group had been formed at the last session of the Specialized Section which will discuss this question. The delegation of the Russian Federation said that it would prepare a document on that question for the Specialized Section.

32. A correction was pointed out concerning section V A.

33. It was felt by several delegations that the deletion of the second paragraph of IIB.(iii) did not properly reflect what was decided at GE.1. Other delegations, however, remembered that the paragraph had been deleted. In the end it was decided to keep the paragraph and to adopt the standard.

34. The Working Party adopted the proposed text as amended as a revised UN/ECE Standard. It will be published as addendum 6 to this report.

Melons

Document for this session: TRADE/WP.7/GE.1/2000/25/Add.7

35. A correction was pointed out concerning footnote 2.

36. The Working Party adopted the amendments proposed as a revision to the UN/ECE Standard for Melons. The consolidated text of the standard will be published as addendum 7 to this report.

Aubergines, headed cabbages, cauliflowers, fennel, sweet peppers and courgettes

Document for this session: TRADE/WP.7/GE.1/2000/25/Add.7

37. The Working Party adopted the amendments to the standards as proposed. The consolidated texts of the revised standards will be published as Addenda to this report as follows:

- Addendum 8: Aubergines
- Addendum 9: Headed Cabbages
- Addendum 10: Cauliflowers
- Addendum 11: Fennel
- Addendum 12: Sweet Peppers
- Addendum 13: Courgettes

Tomatoes

Document for this session: TRADE/WP.7/GE.1/2000/25/Add.9

38. A correction was pointed out concerning section I.

39. The Working Party adopted the proposed text as amended as a revised UN/ECE Standard. It will be published as addendum 14 to this report.

Avocados

Document for this session: TRADE/WP.7/GE.1/2000/25/Add.7

40. The Working Party adopted the amendments proposed as a UN/ECE Recommendation. The consolidated text of the recommendation will be published as addendum 15 to this report.

Plums

Document for this session: TRADE/WP.7/GE.1/2000/25/Add.8

41. Corrections were pointed out concerning sections: I, annex.

42. The Working Party adopted the proposed text as amended as UN/ECE Recommendation. It will be published as addendum 16 to this report.

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Proposal to create an internationally recognized list of trade descriptions and classification codes for fruits and vegetables.

71. The secretariat introduced this agenda item: EAN International operates world-wide in the area of electronic commerce (supply chain management, article numbering, bar codes, modelling) and is very active in the Specialized Section on Standardization of Meat (e.g. co-hosting the meeting of rapporteurs in Brazil).

72. EAN International has informed the secretariat about the issue of generic coding for fruits and vegetables. In addition to company product-specific codes, both national and quasi-international classification code lists are currently linked to EAN/UCC standards. As a result, EAN members are often confused by the variety of codes used, and dissatisfied with the lack of "internationally recognized" trade descriptions and classification codes for fruits and vegetables.

73. EAN International suggests to negotiate a code list for fruits and vegetables under the auspices of the UN/ECE. The Working Party is invited to consider whether this issue should be taken up and where and how it should be dealt with.

74. Several delegations expressed their interest in this matter but stated that they would like to get further information before coming to any decision.

75. The Chairman stated that, in his opinion, the following steps would have to be taken:

- evaluate current practice (codes, trade descriptions)
- get clear information about the status of the codes used
- explore possibilities of international harmonization of these codes

76. It was decided to invite EAN International to prepare a document for the next session of GE.1 and to participate in the meeting.

Proposal to adopt the OECD document on exchange of information on non-conformity cases

Document for this session: TRADE/WP.7/2000/7 (Germany)

77. At the last session of the Specialized Section on Coordination of Standardization of Fresh Fruit and Vegetables, the delegation of the OECD Scheme introduced a document for the exchange of non-conformity cases. The Specialized Section agreed that the use of this document should be promoted in countries using the UN/ECE standards. There was no decision yet whether reference should be made to the OECD document or whether the document should be adopted and published as a UN/ECE document.

78. In TRADE/WP.7/2000/7, the delegation of Germany proposed to adopt the OECD document as a UN/ECE text and to distribute it on the UN/ECE home page. In a footnote, the origin of the document should be referenced. Any proposals for the amendment of this document should be made to the OECD Plenary.

79. The Working Party accepted this proposal and adopted the OECD document with the following footnote:

“* This document is based on and fully harmonized with the corresponding document developed and updated by the OECD Scheme for the Application of International Standards for Fruit and Vegetables.”

80. The document will be published as addendum 21 to this report. Requests for amendments to this document should be transmitted directly to the OECD.

81. It was mentioned that a list of contact points for quality control would be useful for the application of this document. The Working Party decided to request the specialized sections GE.1 and GE.2 to establish such lists.

82. It was further proposed to publish the Guide on Implementation of Quality Control on the home page.

83. Many delegations not being familiar with this document, it was decided to request the GE.1 Specialized Section to review it and make recommendations to the Working Party as to its use.

Proposal to prepare a list of countries accepting/not accepting code marks

Document for this session: TRADE/WP.7/2000/INF.1 (South Africa)

84. At the last session of the Specialized Section on Coordination of Standardization of Fresh Fruit and Vegetables, the delegation of South Africa stated that, in their country, code marks were used and sometimes shipments were rejected in Europe because the address of the packer/exporter was not explicitly marked. In the present document, South Africa proposed the preparation of a list of countries not accepting code marks and requiring the full name and address of the packer or dispatcher.

85. The Working Party accepted this proposal. It requested the secretariat to prepare a small questionnaire as addendum 22 to this report to request this information from all countries and to publish the results on the home page.

Use of trade marks in UN/ECE standards

Discussion in the Specialized Section: see TRADE/WP.7/GE.1/2000/25, paras. 97-101.

86. At the last session of the Specialized Section on Coordination of Standardization of Fresh Fruit and Vegetables the use of trade marks was discussed following problems with a company holding a trade mark on a varietal name of table grapes (e.g. Superior SeedlessTM). The secretariat was asked to contact the legal counsel of the United Nations.

87. The secretariat reported that a letter had been written to the legal counsel following the GE.1 session but that the complexity of the problem required further advice from the legal counsel in New York and that the results would be reported directly to the next session of GE.1.

Revision of the working procedures of the Working Party and its Specialized Sections

88. The secretariat reported that an informal working group had discussed a draft revision of the working procedures during the last GE.1 session. According to the comments made the document was updated to be discussed during a further session of the working group, meeting during this session. It is hoped that an official document can be presented to the next session of the Working Party.

Elaboration of explanatory material to UN/ECE standards

89. The question was discussed at an informal working group during the last GE.1 session as well as at the last session of the Committee for Trade, Industry and Enterprise Development. According to the information given by the Director of the Division, Dr. C. Cosgrove-Sacks, additional resources were requested for the work on agricultural standards. She further said that the success of this request depended upon the support received from the missions and ministries and that it was essential that delegations informed their missions and ministries on the importance they attached to this work. She stressed that the secretariat was prepared to support the work according to clear priorities set by the member States.

90. The secretariat will keep the Working Party informed on further developments in this area.

Acceptances of UN/ECE Standards

91. The Working Party discussed which information on acceptances of UN/ECE standards would be useful to maintain in an updated form on the home page of the agricultural unit.

92. The Working Party decided that the information available to the secretariat at present should be published on the home page. The information will initially be arranged by country and later on also by standard. The page will be updated according to new information received.

93. The Working Party also decided that all specialized sections should discuss the question of application of their standards (whether they are applied as they are or with amendments in national law etc.).