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Specialized Section on Co-ordination of
Standardization of Fresh Fruit and Vegetables
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PROPOSAL FOR REVISION OF UN/ECE STANDARDS

Onions

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Text on grey background = new text

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Proposal for revision of Standard FFV-25 (Onions)

STANDARDS FOR ONIONS

I. DEFINITION OF PRODUCE

This standard applies to onions of varieties (cultivars) grown from *Allium cepa L.* to be supplied to the consumer in the natural state, green onions with full leaves and onions for industrial processing being excluded.

II. PROVISIONS CONCERNING QUALITY

The purpose of the standard is to define the quality requirements for onions at the export control stage, after preparation and packaging.

A. Minimum requirements

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

- intact; ~~however, the presence of small cracks in the outer skin and the absence of a part of the outer skin are not considered as defects provided that the flesh is not revealed~~
- 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
- free from damage due to frost
- sufficiently dry for the intended use (in the case of pickling onions, at least the first two outer skins and stem must be fully dried)
- without hollow or tough stems
- practically free from pests
- practically free from damages caused by pests
- free of abnormal external moisture
- free of any foreign smell and/or taste.

In addition the stems must be twisted or clean cut and must not exceed 4.6 cm in length (except for stringed onions).

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

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

B. Classification

Onions are classified in two classes defined below:

(i) Class I

Onions in this class must be of good quality. ~~In shape and colour they~~ Their characteristics must be typical of the variety.

The bulbs must be:

- firm and compact
- unsprouted (free from shoots visible from the outside)
- ~~— without hollow or tough stems~~
- free from swelling caused by abnormal vegetative development
- practically free of root tufts; however, for onions harvested before complete maturity, root tufts are allowed.

~~Light staining which does not affect the last dried skin protecting the flesh is allowed.~~

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

- a slight defect in shape
- a slight defect in colouring
- light staining which does not affect the last dried skin protecting the flesh, provided it does not cover more than one fifth of the bulb's surface
- superficial cracks in, and partial absence of the outer skins, provided the flesh is protected.

(ii) Class II

This class includes onions which do not qualify for inclusion in Class I, but satisfy the minimum requirements specified above. They must be reasonably firm.

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

~~— shape and colouring not typical of the variety~~

– defect in shape

– defect in colouring

– early evidence of shoot growth visible from the outside (no more than 10 per cent by number or weight by unit of presentation)

– traces due to rubbing

– slight marking caused by parasites or disease

– small healed cracks

– slight bruising, healed, unlikely to impair keeping qualities.

– root tufts

– stains which do not affect the last dried skin protecting the flesh, provided they do not cover more than half the bulb's surface

– cracks in the outer skins and partial absence of over a maximum of one third of the bulb's surface, provided the flesh is not damaged.

~~— They may have root tufts.~~

~~— Stains which do not affect the last dried skin protecting the flesh are allowed.~~

III. PROVISIONS CONCERNING SIZING

Size is determined by the maximum diameter of the equatorial section. The difference between the diameters of the smallest and largest onions in the same package must not exceed:

– 5 mm where the diameter of the smallest onion is 10 mm and over but under 20 mm. However, where the diameter of the onion is 15 mm and over but under 25 mm, the difference may be 10 mm

– 15 mm where the diameter of the smallest onion is 20 mm and over but under 40 mm

– 20 mm where the diameter of the smallest onion is 40 mm and over but under 70 mm

- 30 mm where the diameter of the smallest onion is 70 mm or over.

The minimum diameter is fixed at 10 mm.

IV. PROVISIONS CONCERNING TOLERANCES

Tolerances in respect of quality and size shall be allowed in each package (or in each batch, for onions in bulk) for produce not satisfying the requirements of the class indicated.

A. Quality tolerances

(i) Class I

10 per cent by number or weight of onions not satisfying the requirements of this class, but meeting those of Class II or, exceptionally, coming within the tolerances of that class.

(ii) Class II

10 per cent by number or weight of onions satisfying neither the requirements of the class nor the minimum requirements, with the exception of produce affected by rotting or any other deterioration rendering it unfit for consumption.

B. Size tolerances

For all classes: 10 per cent by number or weight of onions not satisfying the size identified, but with a diameter of no more than 20 per cent below or above it.

V. PROVISIONS CONCERNING PRESENTATION

A. Uniformity

The contents of each package (or each batch, for onions in bulk) must be uniform and contain only onions of the same origin, variety, quality and size.

The visible part of the contents of the package (or of the batch, for onions in bulk) must be representative of the entire contents.

B. Packaging

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

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

Packages must be free of all foreign matter.

C. Presentation

Onions may be presented:

- arranged in layers
- packed or transported in bulk
- in strings ~~(of not less than 16 bulbs, with fully dried stems).~~
- either of a certain number of bulbs, in which case the strings must contain at least six onions (with fully dried stems)
- or of a certain net weight.

For stringed onions, the characteristics of the strings in any one package (number of bulbs or net weight) must be uniform.

VI. PROVISIONS CONCERNING MARKING

1. Each package¹ must bear the following particulars in letters grouped on the same side, legibly and indelibly marked, and visible from the outside:

A. Identification

Packer) Name and address or
and/or) officially issued or
Dispatcher) accepted code mark.²

B. Nature of produce

- "Onions" if the contents are not visible from the outside.

C. Origin of produce

- Country of origin and, optionally, national, regional or local place name.

D. Commercial specifications

- Class
- Size expressed by minimum and maximum diameters
- Net weight.

E. Official control mark (optional)

2. For onions dispatched in bulk (loaded directly onto a means of transport), the above particulars must be contained in a document accompanying the goods and fixed in a visible place within the vehicle.

¹ Package units of produce prepacked for direct sale to the consumer shall not be subject to these marking provisions but shall conform to the national requirements. However, the markings referred to shall in any event be shown on the transport packaging containing such package units

² 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.