

Specialized Section on Standardization of Fresh Fruit and Vegetables

Fifty-fifth session

Geneva, 4 - 8 May 2009

Item 2(c) of the provisional agenda

Discussion on Restructuring

At its November 2008 meeting, the Working Party decided to start a discussion on restructuring its work to accelerate the development and adoption of standards, taking into consideration the possible transfer of the OECD Scheme activities to UNECE and implications of the new Commission Regulation on marketing standards for fruits and vegetables on the work of UNECE on agricultural quality standards.

This document presents views on restructuring from Australia, Mongolia, South Africa, the United Kingdom and the United States of America.

The Specialized Section is expected to agree on its position concerning the restructuring of the activities of the Working Party.

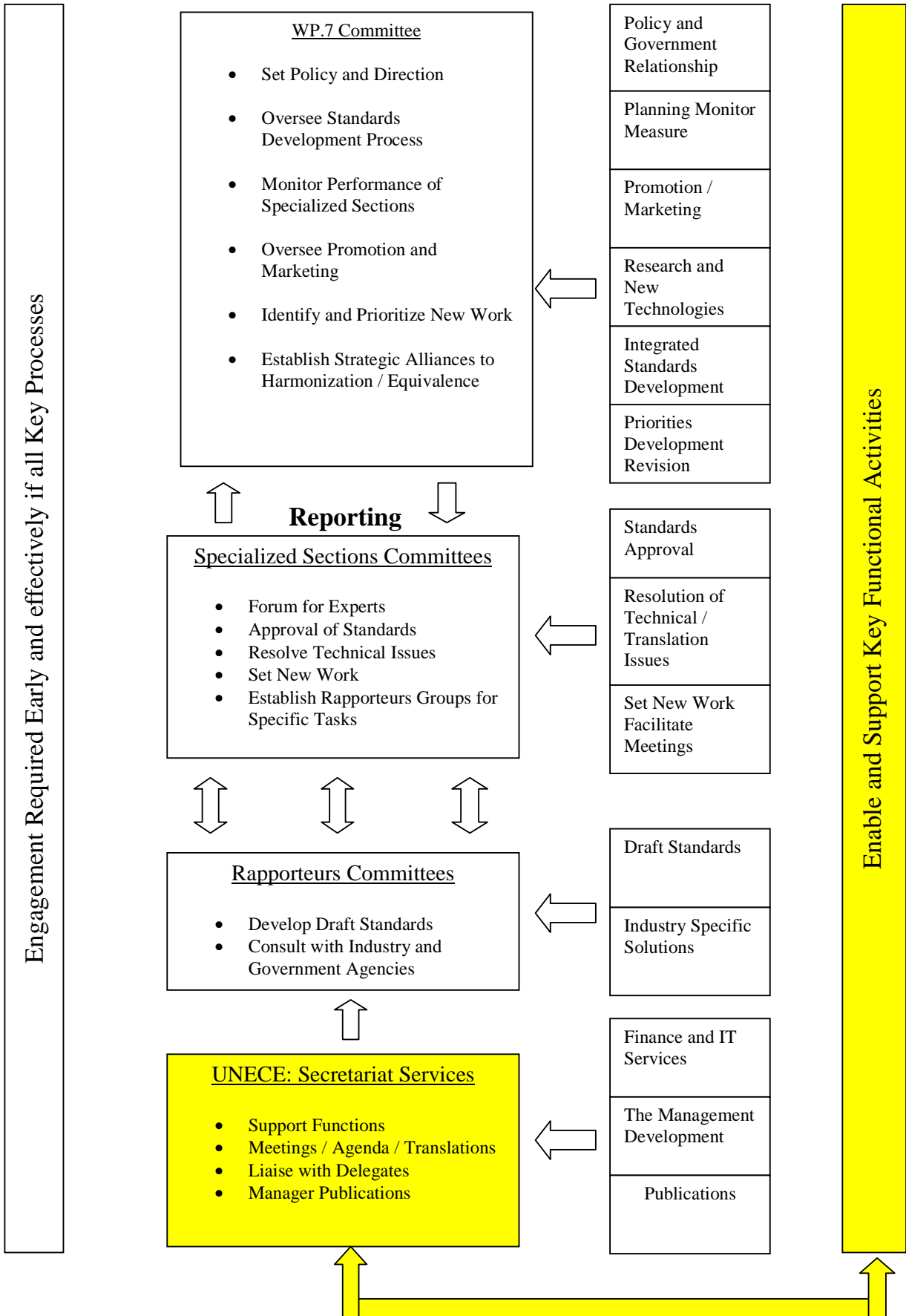
Australia

The focus of the Working Party “WP.7 Committee” should be to set policies for identifying new work and overseeing the development of UN Standards to support initiatives (goals and objectives) of the committee for Trade and Development.

- To set policy for administration including planning, promotion / communication and training
- To monitor and measure the performance of the Specialized Sections
- To establish strategic alliances with OECD, Codes, FAO / WHO and other International / Global Standards Bodies
- To work with Governments to integrate / harmonize or seek equivalence to reduce T & T's (maintain Mark Access)
- To prioritize the revision of Standards to ensure that they remain dynamic and relevant to the market
- To set Policy for publications including targets for completion
- To provide direction to the Specialized Sections by identifying and prioritizing new work.
- To receive reports from the Specialized Sections on progress and the Approval of New Standards

Note: The Proposal supports the delegation of authority for approving Standards to the Specialized Section Committees.

UNECE Trade Development: Group



Mongolia

Standards should be easy to understand, readily available, and accessible to the business communities, especially from developing countries.

The Working Party and UNECE should meet not only in Geneva but more often in countries outside Europe, particularly in those countries or regions where the standards are most relevant and applicable.

Standards should be a boost for trade not a burden. Therefore, the trade facilitation components of each standard should be emphasized. Some organizations promote standards that are a burden for business; business costs increase and the organizations benefit. This kind of situation is found in some developing and emerging countries.

All in all, the efficiency of the Working Party and its specialized sections should be reflected in the standards they produce. Whether those become or not efficient trade facilitation tools will be seen in how the stakeholders or interested parties put the standards into practice. In order to be effective, standards should therefore be developed through a demand-driven and inclusive process.

South Africa

Because the UNECE member States decisions are taken on a consensus basis, experts should provide scientific evidence to support their statements. The UNECE standard drafting and amendment process is not very favourable to countries outside the region and we are always in the minority when it comes to voting for consensus. But we should be able to insist that all proposals be justified.

United Kingdom

Current situation: Each specialized section attends a one week meeting in Geneva and completes relevant areas of work. Delegates then attend the Working Party 7 in November to approve the work of each specialized section. In practice this has meant that the work is approved in November at WP.7 by delegates from other specialized sections. In the case of the meat, seed potatoes and dry and dried produce this usually means that with the exception of the chair of that specialized section approval is given by delegates with little or no knowledge of the products. This results in unnecessary travel and time costs to all delegates for an essential but unproductive meeting.

Proposal: To discontinue the WP.7 meeting in November and split the role of WP.7.

This would mean some small adjustment to the meetings of the specialized sections and end the WP.7 only meeting. This we believe would lead to more effective meetings for all specialized sections. The proposal is as follows:

Each specialized section meeting would have 3 parts as follows:

- Day 1: 13.00 – 18.00 The “WP7” part
- Day 2 - 4 Specialized section agenda items, followed by
- Day 5: 10.00 – 13.00 Report of meeting.

Such meetings would be held once a year for meat, seed potatoes, dry and dried and twice a year for fresh fruit and vegetables. (Dependent on negotiations with OECD on concentrating work at

UNECE.) However specialized sections could negotiate with the Secretariat for additional meetings as considered necessary.

WP.7 would be split into 4 or 5 parts as a result. So at each specialized section on the first day of the meeting all relevant news updates would be covered by the Secretariat. All decisions from the previous specialized section meeting would be approved or, if not, returned to the section for further discussion. Then at each meeting, once WP.7 decisions and updates have been made, the specialized section could then on the following days continue discussions on previously published agenda items.

Summary: We do not believe that this proposed change makes any difference to WP.7. It would simply operate in a number of parts rather than at one meeting as at present. The advantage would be that delegates with relevant knowledge would be voting/approving documents instead of many without the appropriate knowledge as at present. However it may be that changes to the Geneva protocol or other procedural changes are necessary. The Secretariat will have to advise us as to how easy it would be to make these changes.

Extraordinary meetings of WP.7 including all specialized sections could still be held if the secretariat/delegates felt these were necessary.

United States of America

The United States of America is submitting the following comments as part of the discussion on restructuring the UNECE Working Party 7- on Agricultural Quality Standards and its Specialized Sections:

- Meetings - the meetings of the Working Party should take place within 2 but not more than 3 months after its last specialized section meeting. This would facilitate decision making and expedite the development of standards. E.g. this year GE. 6 meet in March this year and the WP.7 meets in November. Technically, items such as a trial that requires WP. 7 approvals will officially only have four to five months duration. Basically, if the Working Party become more of an oversight and strategic planning function for the specialized sections, then there needs to be more lag time between when they meet and the next specialized section meeting so that there is time to put together the needed documents for the next meeting
- The Working Party must develop some type method/system for measuring the performance of the Specialized Sections such as - relevance of the standard developed or revised, frequency of revision of a standard and/or the acceptance of standard by industry.
- Find ways to expedite standard development duration such as use of rapporteur meeting for all specialized sections between plenary sessions as done by the Specialized Section on Standardization of Meat GE.11.
- Find ways to increase the participation of the agricultural industry in the standard development process thereby, having the standards reflect trading practices and not imposing unwarranted new requirements on trade. This might warrant having a small group of industry advisors available to run ideas and drafts by, stakeholders, on the other hand, we are providing directions and ideas based on our connections to the industry, and base them on needs heard during our visits and meetings with the industry.

- Give the authority to the Specialized Sections to approve standards developed and new work. The Specialized Sections will only report to the WP.7 and take policy decisions /guidance from it. This is designed to prevent someone who did not attend a specialized section meeting to provide input, but then shows up at the Working Party to shoot down the work of the specialized section.
- Have all brochures developed by its Specialized Sections available electronically with guidance/requirements for best viewing results (screen resolution, printing – type and/or quality of paper, and printer).