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Letter from Europatat

Contribution from Europatat



Union Européenne du Commerce des Pommes de Terre
European Union of the Potato Trade
Europäische Union des Kartoffelhandels

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Brussels, 10 May 2006.

Dear Sir,

Concerns : meeting of the specialised section for standardisation of fruit and vegetables (ECE/UNO) on 16-17 May 2006 in Geneva.

Europatat, the European Union of the potato trade, has discussed at a number of meetings and occasions the two proposals of modification of the ECE standards for early and ware potatoes, which have been introduced by France and Germany.

These proposals have been foreseen on the agenda of the specialised section on standardisation of fresh fruit and vegetables, in the working party on agricultural quality standards of the committee for trade, industry and enterprise development scheduled for 16-17 May 2006 in Geneva, as has been the case in the meeting of March 2005 of this group.

Once again we want to apologise for not having taken part at this meeting last year. Nevertheless Europatat had presented its position in a letter dated March 3, written to Mr. T. Heilandt.

First of all Europatat confirms its previous position that the ECE standards remain a framework to facilitate the exchanges of potatoes within Europe. Practices in the different countries will result in possible specific standards related to the cooking usage in these countries or even regions. We distinguish at the moment big differences between the European countries, even within the 25 EU member states. On top of these basic standards producers, traders and retailers are able to work out specific standards within quality assurance schemes.

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The position taken by Europatat on these two proposals mentioned in point 3 of the agenda for the meeting of 16/17 May in this latest letter, has been confirmed at the meeting of the Europatat board and General Assembly in Killarney on May 26 2005.

The German proposal includes a merging of the standards for early potatoes and ware potatoes. Although this proposal does not imply any modifications of the contents of the actual standard – as has been proven by the two year trial of this modified standard – Europatat wants to express its concern that the combined standard would result in the withdrawal of the specific definition for both products, which differ from each other (production period, storage capacity, period of marketing, physical characterisations, ...).

As a result both products are determined by a different customs code.

Europatat asks to maintain the two different standards, as well as concerning the presentation as the contents, because of the fear that one potato standard would finally result into one customs code for potatoes. Although the quality standard is not directly related to the customs code, it is obvious that practise is use as a base for decisions when the list of customs codes is reviewed / reduced.

Supplementary to this argument, Europatat fears that the merging of the two standards could create more confusion in the profession as well as on the level of the consumer.

Europatat cannot agree at all with the French proposal, which limits the trade possibilities and the quality control to potatoes in international traffic between the EU member states and destined to these countries.

Europatat wonders why this proposal of standard, which seems to be limited to a number of EU members, is appearing on the agenda of the Economic Commission for Europe. This proposal could result in a Europe with a different speed, which by no means will facilitate trade. The actual standards are a good base for trade and offer the possibility for private standards to differentiate their products.

A number of members of Europatat have confirmed that this standard is in no way applicable / acceptable to their country because of agricultural reasons (soil, tradition, ...).

We hope to be able to add all supplementary comments at the meeting on Tuesday 16 May in Geneva and will be glad to answer the question by the representatives of the members at that occasion.

Yours sincerely,

Romain COOLS
Secretary General