

ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

COMMITTEE ON TRADE

Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards

Specialized Section on Standardization of Seed Potatoes

Meeting of the Extended Bureau

Emmeloord, Netherlands, 20 - 21 October 2008

INFORMATION ON THE RESULTS OF THE MEETING OF THE BUREAU

Note by the Chairman of the Specialized Section

This document summarizes the discussions at the Extended Bureau meeting held in Emmeloord, Netherlands, on 20 and 21 October 2008.

1. At the invitation of the Dutch Authorities, the Extended Bureau held its meeting on 20 and 21 October 2008 in Emmeloord, at the premises of the Dutch General Inspection Service (NAK). The following persons participated: Bartel de Muynck (Belgium), Greg Wolff (Canada), Gérard Crouau (France), Kurt Günter Erbe (Germany), Pier Giacomo Bianchi (Italy), Dan Murphy (Ireland), Jos Flammang (Luxembourg), Hendrik Van de Haar (Netherlands), Manuela Tutuianu (Romania), Henry Gilliand (Switzerland), John Kerr (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland), Willem Schrage (United States of America) and Serguei Malanitchev (UNECE).

2. Addy Risseeuw, technical director of NAK, opened the meeting. NAK's statutory task is to inspect propagation material. Growers, breeders, traders and users are represented in the board and other NAK bodies. NAK carries out its inspection functions on instruction and under supervision of the Minister of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality. The Minister lays down the inspection regulations, but anyone can send proposals for their modification to NAK. This way the inspection system is adapted to changes in practice. The inspection activities are fully financed by the industry at breakeven costs.

3. The delegations visited the laboratory facilities of NAK.

4. The Extended Bureau expressed its gratitude to the NAK authorities for hosting the meeting.

5. Below is a summary of the discussions and decisions taken by the Extended Bureau.

A. List of diseases and pests

Documentation: <http://www.unece.org/trade/agr/standard/potatoes/PestPicturesE.htm>

6. The latest version of the list in English is on the UNECE website. The Bureau decided to integrate the English, French and Russian versions of the list into one trilingual document with illustrative photographs and with a possibility to enlarge these photographs in a separate screen.

B. Tuber moth

Documentation: Note on tuber moth by Belgium

7. Tuber moth can cause serious damage to tubers in warmer climates. It is a quarantine pest in North America, but not in the European Union, and it is not considered as such by EPPO. Many countries have zero tolerance for tuber moth. Tuber moth larvae eat out galleries in tubers and may seriously damage commercial quality and vigour of seed potatoes.

8. The Extended Bureau decided to address the quality deterioration caused by tuber moth within a broader category of internal defects currently not covered by the Standard. The delegations of Belgium (focal point), Germany and the Netherlands volunteered to prepare a paper suggesting how the damage caused by tuber moth, as well as other internal defects could be reflected in the Standard. They will also provide pictures illustrating these defects.

C. Non-compliance at destination

Documentation: Note on dispute resolution by France

9. The note was translated into English and distributed to the participants. It was pointed out again that if the Specialized Section decides to include in the Standard provisions on the assessment of non-compliance at destination, they should not duplicate or contradict the existing RUCIP and IPPC (International Plant Protection Convention) rules. The delegation of the United Kingdom volunteered to draft provisions on non-compliance for inclusion in the Standard to be considered at the next meeting of the Specialized Section.

D. *Erwinia* (blackleg)

Documentation: “Increasing problems with *Erwinia* - the ecology of blackleg pathogens”, presentation by Mr. Jan van der Wolf, researcher at PRI-WUR

10. The presentation will be posted on the UNECE website. The meeting agreed on the following draft statement on blackleg to be submitted to the Specialized Section.

11. Blackleg occurrence in seed potato crops is an important indicator of quality. In the UNECE Standard for Seed Potatoes, strict tolerances for blackleg in the growing crop and at lot inspection underpin, as part of the rot tolerance, the control of this disease in certified seed.

12. Disease expression in the progeny crop is not always directly related to either inspection findings or bacterial loading in mother tubers. This is due to the importance of the environmental and agronomic influences in the epidemiology of this disease. However, regular inspections remain an effective tool to reduce the spread of the disease.

13. Conditions which favour blackleg, particularly excessive moisture and in the case of *Dickeya* high temperatures, can lead to spread of the disease. For the time being, enforcing strict tolerances at certification continues to be the best available regulatory mechanism to control blackleg in marketed seed potatoes.

14. Good agronomic practices, such as forced ventilation immediately after harvest, removal of diseased tubers prior to planting, allowing mother tubers to fully deteriorate prior to harvest, are all important in blackleg control.

15. The Extended Bureau decided to amend the definition of blackleg in Annex VII of the Standard and in the list of pests and diseases to read “formerly *E. carotovora*” instead of “syn.”.

E. Crop inspection practices

Documentation: Summary of replies to the questionnaire

16. The purpose of collecting information on national crop inspection practices was to help develop respective provisions for including in the Standard. The delegations of the United

Kingdom (focal point), the Netherlands and the United States volunteered to draw up draft provisions for consideration at the next meeting of the Specialized Section.

F. Post-harvest tests

Documentation: Summary of replies to the questionnaire

17. The results of the survey had shown that many countries carried out post-harvest tests, but not always for all classes and categories of seed potatoes. The Extended Bureau agreed that it would be appropriate to complete annex IX of the Standard by explaining several ways of carrying out post-harvest tests, for viruses only, without recommending any specific procedure. The delegations of the United States (focal point), Germany, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom offered to draft proposals for the next meeting of the Specialized Section.

G. IPPC draft standard on tissue culture material

18. It is expected that the standard will be adopted in 2010. The Extended Bureau agreed on the following comments and concerns on the draft standard and asked the UNECE secretariat to forward them to the IPPC secretariat.

19. The draft IPPC standard uses varied terminology relating to potato micropropagative material. The UNECE Standard S-1 “Concerning the marketing and commercial quality of seed potatoes”, which was adopted prior to the development of the draft IPPC standard and has existed for several years, also presents specific terminology relating to potato micropropagative material. Several terms and their definitions differ from those presented in the draft IPPC standard. For example, the UNECE standard uses the term “tissue culture” class seed where the IPPC draft uses “potato micropropagative material”. The Specialized Section understands that the IPPC has worked to maximize harmonization of terminology and definitions with relevant international standard-setting organizations and would therefore request that the IPPC’s Technical Panel on the Glossary review this issue. At the very least, the Specialized Section would hope that a footnote could be added to the relevant section(s) in the draft IPPC standard where shared terminology appears in order to indicate that the UNECE Standard uses an alternative term but with equivalent meaning or scope (perhaps also stating what the term is).

20. Section 7 of the draft IPPC standard indicates that “In some circumstances the importing country may request to participate in such [a compliance-related] audit”. The circumstances referred to seem vague and ambiguous and therefore potentially open to abuse. The wording of this section should be elaborated on and more detail provided. Perhaps, for example, the circumstances could be spelled out, such as: “When considering imports of potato micropropagative material the importing country may request to participate in such an audit if required to ensure that appropriate phytosanitary measures have been consistently maintained to produce the material”.

21. In addition to the phytosanitary issues addressed in the draft IPPC standard, during the tissue culture stage of a certification scheme varietal identity is also an essential consideration as all subsequent classes of potatoes depend on varietal identity and purity achieved at the tissue culture stage. Although this quality aspect is beyond the scope of IPPC, nevertheless users of the

IPPC standard are likely to need international guidance on maintaining varietal purity. Since the UNECE standard provides such guidance, a footnote pointing out this content of the UNECE standard, perhaps related to the “scope” section of the IPPC standard, would be very useful.

22. Distinct concerns exist over the presence of the extensive pest list contained in appendix 1. Although the Specialized Section recognizes that this list is not intended to represent pests for which testing must always be carried out, there is an expectation that in some cases importing countries may inappropriately and without technical justification demand testing for all pests on the list. Wording should be presented to make it very clear that testing for any pest on the list should only be required where necessary and technically justified by pest-risk assessment (PRA).

23. Also in relation to the pest list presented in appendix I, the Specialized Section notes that plant taxonomic authorities now consider the genus *Erwinia* to have been replaced by the genera *Pectobacterium* and *Dickeya*.

H. Control under official supervision

24. There is an intention in some EU Member States to introduce control of seeds under official supervision. However, as far as seed potatoes are concerned, their inspection must be official in the EU. The Extended Bureau decided that there was no need to develop provisions for the Standard on how independent persons could inspect seed potatoes under official supervision. This item was withdrawn from the future work of the Specialized Section.

I. Re-classification of seed potatoes into a lower grade

25. This item was included in the agenda to exchange information on whether countries permit re-classification of seed into lower grades. Most countries do allow downgrading because of surplus production and inability to sell it at the originally assigned grade, or in order to forbid multiplication of seed while allowing its use to grow consumption potatoes.

J. Potato cyst nematodes (PCN)

Documentation: “Sampling for potato cyst nematodes” - presentation by Mr. Ton Stolte, Field Staff Manager of NAK

26. The presentation will be posted on the UNECE website. The participants visited the PCN testing laboratory of NAK.

K. Promotion of the Standard and the next meeting of the Specialized Section

27. The Extended Bureau agreed to have its next meeting back-to-back with the regional workshop on seed potatoes to be held in Egypt during the week of 16-20 March 2009. The meeting will take place in lieu of the official session of the Specialized Section. To decide on the exact timing of both events, the secretariat will ascertain with the host country how much time will be needed for a technical field visit.

28. The purpose of the regional workshop will be to promote the use of the Standard as an international reference, to encourage its practical application in the countries of North Africa and the Middle East and to invite these countries to participate in the work of the Specialized Section. Many of the countries export or have the potential to export early potatoes to Europe, and the application of the Standard would limit the risk of spreading diseases and pests.

29. The Specialized Section can offer similar presentations as those given in Kislovodsk. An additional presentation might be on the EU requirements for imports of potatoes. The host country should be invited to present its system of seed-potato certification. To learn more about the potato sector in the region, the Extended Bureau thought it might be appropriate to ask participating countries to reply to the following questions:

1. What is the total potato production (in hectares and tons)?
2. What is per capita consumption of potatoes and do you expect it will grow?
3. What are the seasons for potato production?
4. What are the regions of potato production?
5. What are average yields (per hectare) per region and season?
6. What are the differences in agronomic practices between seasons and regions (e.g. cutting seed, irrigation, storage, seed source)?
7. What quantities of seed potatoes are needed for each region and season?
8. What are the main constraints for potato production (diseases and pests, seed quality, soil and climate)?
9. How do you ensure the quality of seed:
 - Do you buy imported seed?
 - How do you optimize physiological age, how and for how long do you store seed?
 - Do you use farm-saved or domestically certified seed?
10. What varieties do you grow and for which purposes?
11. Do you have a seed production system, including certification?
12. What are the main elements of your certification system?
13. What is the quantity of seed potatoes produced under your certification system?
14. Are you familiar with the UNECE Standard?
15. Do you intend to use it and what do you expect from it?

30. The Extended Bureau asked the secretariat to proceed with preparing the workshop.

L. Electronic certification

31. The Extended Bureau took note of the International Workshop on Electronic Phytosanitary Certification to be held in Ottawa, Canada, on 3 and 4 February, 2009.

M. Varietal identity

32. The Extended Bureau reconfirmed the importance of the work of the Specialized Section on the issue of varietal identity. This work should be extended to cover the polymerase chain reaction (PCR), which is used unofficially in many countries. The delegations of France,

Germany and the Netherlands will prepare a questionnaire to collect information on how the varietal identity is assessed including the use of the PCR technique.

N. Other business

33. The delegations of Belgium and Luxembourg confirmed their offer to jointly host the next meeting of the Extended Bureau from 19 to 21 October 2009. The delegation of Canada confirmed its offer to host the Extended Bureau meeting in Quebec or Prince Edward Island in 2010.