



**Economic and Social
Council**

Distr.
GENERAL

TRADE/WP.7/GE.11/1998/5
22 May 1998

ORIGINAL : ENGLISH

ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

Committee on Trade, Industry and
Enterprise Development

Working Party on Standardization of
Perishable Produce and Quality Development

Meeting of Experts on Standardization of
Meat (Porcine, Bovine and Poultry)

REPORT ON ITS SEVENTH SESSION

Introduction

1. The Meeting of Experts on Standardization of Meat held its seventh session in Geneva from 11 to 13 May 1998. The session was attended by delegations from Austria; France; Greece; Hungary; Lithuania; Poland; Russian Federation; Spain; Switzerland; United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America. The following countries participated under Article 11: Argentina; Australia; Brazil and New Zealand. A representative of the following non-governmental organization also participated: EAN (European Article Numbering Association) International.

2. A Meeting of Rapporteurs on Standardization of Bovine Meat took place in Geneva on 11 May 1998.

Opening of the Session

3. The Deputy-Director of the UN/ECE Trade Division, Mr. Hans Hansell, welcomed delegates and thanked the Greek authorities for hosting the January 1998 Meeting of Rapporteurs.

Adoption of the Agenda (Item 1)

4. The Meeting adopted the Provisional Agenda with the addition of document TRADE/WP.7/GE.11/1998/CRP.2 and a document submitted by the delegation of France on the revised pistola cut description.

Election of Officers (Item 2)

5. The Meeting unanimously confirmed Mr. B. Carpenter (USA) as its Chairman and Mr. P. Hardwick (United Kingdom) as its Vice-Chairman.

Matters of Interest Arising Since the Sixth Session (Item 3)

6. The Meeting took note of document TRADE/WP.7/GE.11/1998/2 on matters of interest arising from the last session of the Working Party.

Report of the Meeting of the Rapporteurs and Consideration of a Proposed Draft Standard for Beef Carcasses and Cuts (Item 4) (documentation TRADE/WP.7/GE.11/1998/3 and TRADE/WP.7/GE.11/1998/4)

7. A representative of EAN International gave a short overview of his organization's activities and suggested that the coding system proposed in document TRADE/WP.7/GE.11/1998/4 be adapted with current EAN practice. It was agreed that the Meeting of Rapporteurs would collaborate with EAN to develop a new coding system.

8. The Rapporteur from France shortly reviewed the changes introduced by the Meeting of Rapporteurs to the pistola cut description drawing attention to the inclusion of the thin flank or flank steak in the forequarter.

9. 2.0 SCOPE: The Meeting agreed to change this section to read: "This standard applies to carcasses and/or associated cuts of domesticated *Bos taurus* and *Bos indicus* marketed as fit for human consumption, demonstrating a characteristic red colour."

10. 4.1 PROVISIONS CONCERNING TEMPERATURE: The recommendation by the Rapporteurs to modify the title of this section, and the addition to the end of paragraph 4.1 (A) of "...and may be (1) wrapped (2) unwrapped" was accepted by the Meeting. The Meeting also agreed to add the words "throughout the supply chain" in (A), (B) and (C) after the word "maintained".

11. 4.2 PROVISIONS CONCERNING CONDITION OF THE MEAT: The Meeting accepted the proposal by the Rapporteurs to remove the word "objectionable" from (B), and after lengthy discussion, the Meeting changed (A) indent 4 to read: "Free of obtrusive bloodstains" and (A) indent 5 to read "Free of unspecified protruding or broken bones".

12. 4.4 PROVISIONS CONCERNING LEAN COLOUR: The Russian delegation requested that the English abbreviation DFD (dark, firm and dry meat) be included in the Russian version of the Standard. The Meeting changed the first sentence to read: "Normal lean beef meat demonstrates a characteristic red colour." Discussion on the provisions contained in the proposed paragraph; the inclusion of another muscle to measure pH; and reference to existing colour scales was postponed to a later stage.

13. 4.5 PROVISIONS CONCERNING ORIGIN AND PRODUCTION HISTORY: As the Meeting agreed that this new section required clarification, e.g. of the reference to the specified 70 per cent carbohydrate diet under 2. Feeding Systems (A), the Rapporteurs were requested to revisit this section, and if possible, ensure continuity in the standard, e.g. reflect on moving provisions on slaughterhouse production to section 4.6 or consider where reference to conformity assessment could be made. The Meeting also accepted to add under 3. Animal Identification a last indent reading "geographic origin".

14. 4.6 PROVISIONS CONCERNING PACKING, STORAGE AND TRANSPORT (should replace paragraph 15): It was agreed that reference to observing temperature criteria during transport should be included in this section, and after some deliberations it was agreed that the first sentence of the last paragraph should include a reference to the thermal condition of the meat, i.e. read as follows: "The conditions of storage before dispatch and the equipment used for transportation shall be appropriate to the physical and in particular the thermal condition of the meat (chilled, chilled in a modified atmosphere, frozen, or deep-frozen) and shall be in accordance with the requirements of the importing country."

15. With reference to the definition of primary and secondary covering defined in the first paragraph of this section, the Meeting accepted the proposal of the Rapporteurs, however, requested the Rapporteurs to define the food grade material which should be used. The French delegation noted that the correct French wording for "modified atmosphere" was "atmosphère protectrice". The Russian delegation pointed to a similar translation problem in the Russian version of the document.

16. 4.4 PROVISIONS CONCERNING LEAN COLOUR (cont.): The Meeting discussed in length the limiting pH value mentioned in the second sentence of this paragraph. It was finally agreed to leave it at 6.0 and state that meat above this value was considered dark, firm and dry (DFD). The second sentence was thus changed to read: "Meat with a pH above 6.0 is considered dark, firm and dry meat (DFD)". The Russian delegation noted that the Russian text read "dried" instead of "dry". The Polish delegation circulated a text in which comments were submitted on the selection of provisions under section 4.4 as proposed by the Rapporteurs.

17. Discussion also took place on adding another muscle to determine the pH value. As no consensus was reached, it was decided to refer this matter to the Rapporteurs. Furthermore, after explanations by the delegation of Australia, it was noted that current time provisions referring to pH measurement did neither take into account carcasses which had been electrically stimulated nor muscle temperature requirements. It was agreed that the Rapporteurs should reflect on these issues which represented current commercial practices.

18. 4.7 PROVISIONS CONCERNING LABELLING: The Russian delegation remarked that the term "ethnic slaughter" had been incorrectly translated into Russian as "traditional slaughter". The Meeting reviewed in depth the table proposed by the Rapporteurs and lengthy discussion took place on how statutory information should be conveyed on bone-in quarters. The delegation of France felt that the only way to guarantee traceability was to mark the slaughter number on the bone-in quarters using food grade ink. Other delegations felt that this information should be marked on attached labels. The Meeting finally agreed to change the first entries in the column referring to statutory information to read: "Information to be mentioned on or fixed on the bone-in quarters: - health stamp; - slaughter number or batch number; - slaughter date." A footnote was added which contained a provisional reservation by France requesting consultations with national authorities on this subject.

19. In reviewing the provisions of the table referring to cuts, it was noted that the line between the rows "bone-in quarters" and "cuts" should be removed from the English version of the Standard. Furthermore, after lengthy deliberations, it was stressed that several issues still needed to be clarified by the Rapporteurs, i.e. should the reference to storage conditions be removed from the information mentioned on primary covering; when was labelling on primary or secondary covering appropriate; should it be stated that it had to be on the sales units, considering that it should be on the primary covering when the latter was the principal packaging.

20. It was furthermore agreed to adapt the terminology used in the provisions contained in 4.6 and have the two headers read: "Information to be mentioned on packaging (primary), (in French "emballage (primaire))" and "Information to be mentioned on packing (secondary), (in French "conditionnement (secondaire))".

21. With regard to optional provisions mentioned in the table, the French delegation stressed that in case this information was provided, traceability had to be guaranteed, e.g. by means of a slaughter number on the carcass. It was agreed that the Rapporteurs should propose a short new paragraph referring to this requirement.

22. 4.9 CODIFICATION SYSTEM: (see also paragraph 7 of the present report). It was noted that the codification example given in this section was wrong and would be replaced by a correct one. With reference to the tables, it was mentioned that the UN three digit country code would be used. Lengthy discussion took place on the table referring to merchandising criteria, to which the Rapporteurs had proposed to add a category referring to very young bovines between 6 and 12 months of age. It was felt that the present table needed an overall revision to ensure consistency and simplicity and the Rapporteurs were asked to prepare a proposal for the next session.

23. ANNEXES: The Meeting reviewed the proposed references to Best Practices (document TRADE/WP.7/GE.11/1998/3) which would eventually become the Annexes to the Standard. It was noted that all items included under Annex A and B required further development and clarification by the Rapporteurs. It was also agreed that further items would be added, such as a sub-section c. "Cooling systems" under Annex B II. Slaughter systems. The French delegation remarked that the correct translation for traceability was "tracéabilité". Several delegations stressed that a reference to the best practices of the Annex would

only become credible if a reliable system of traceability was guaranteed. It was also mentioned that the finalization of the Standard should precede the development of Annexes which would evolve with time, include new technologies and respond to new demands of the market and consumer.

24. The Meeting also agreed to insert the section on slaughter and processing, currently in the Annexes, into the body of the Standard, i.e. into a new section 4.6 (see also paragraph 13 of this report) and requested the Rapporteurs to develop this section. Subsequent sections would be re-numbered accordingly.

25. 5.0 SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS (cut descriptions): It was agreed that this section would be amended to include the pistola cut description once the Rapporteurs had approved it. The Rapporteur from France who had elaborated the pistola cut description noted that this cut was basically a variation of a quarter cut and its insertion into the Standard would create no problem. The delegation of Argentina pointed to the difficulty linked to the description of all existing cuts, and it was agreed that the standard should contain basic cut descriptions and only, if possible, go into greater detail. It was mentioned that cross-sectional graphics and photographs would be of great help not only in describing the pistola cut but also all other cuts mentioned in the Standard. The mapping of a cross section three-dimensionally would be investigated in the future.

Other Business (Item 5)

26. PROPOSAL FOR A UN/ECE WORLD TRADE STANDARD MARK: After a short presentation by a member of the UN/ECE Transport Division on mutual recognition agreements and conformity assessment in the automotive sector, the delegation of the United Kingdom briefly outlined his delegation's proposal for a UN/ECE world trade standard mark. As concern was raised on legal issues; conformity assessment; and a common methodology, it was agreed that the Rapporteurs should review the issue at their next session.

a) Future Work

27. A list of items which should be discussed by the Rapporteurs was annexed to this report.

b) Date and Place of the Eighth Session of the Meeting of Experts

28. The Meeting was informed that the eighth session would be held in Geneva on 3 to 5 May 1999.

c) Date and Place of the Next Session of the Meeting of Rapporteurs on Standardization of Bovine Meat

29. The Meeting agreed to hold a Meeting of Rapporteurs within the framework of the Meeting of Experts on 3 May 1999. The dates of further Meetings would be communicated in due course. (see Annex to this report)

30. The Meeting expressed its gratitude to the Rapporteurs and the outgoing Vice-Chairman, Mr. Boismartel, France, for their excellent work. All delegations were invited to send representatives to the Meeting of Rapporteurs

to further the work on the Standard. It was agreed that the secretariat would send a formal invitation to all delegations in due course.

31. It was also noted that the process of inviting all major countries involved in beef trade by means of an invitation letter (initiated at the last session in 1997) had been very successful and that many new delegations had attended this session. Gratitude was expressed for their coming and their contributions.

32. The Meeting also thanked Ms. Annovazzi Jakab for her excellent work and support during the past years.

Adoption of the Report (Item 6)

33. The Meeting of Experts adopted this report on its seventh session.

Annex I

**LIST OF ISSUES TO BE DISCUSSED BY
THE NEXT MEETING OF RAPORTEURS**

1. 4.4 PROVISIONS CONCERNING LEAN COLOUR:
 - pH measurement in additional muscle(s)
 - time provisions referring to pH measurement for electrically stimulated carcasses
 - muscle temperature requirements
 - inclusion of an alternative method to determine the darkness of the lean, i.e. use of colour scales
 - marbling
2. 4.5 PROVISIONS CONCERNING ORIGIN AND PRODUCTION HISTORY
 - re-define high-energy feeding systems
 - inclusion of a reference to conformity assessment
3. 4.6 PROVISIONS CONCERNING SLAUGHTER AND PROCESSING (NEW)
 - drafting and development of this section
4. 4.7 (old 4.6) PROVISIONS CONCERNING PACKING, STORAGE AND TRANSPORT:
 - definition of food grade material
 - surface temperatures
5. 4.8 (old 4.7) PROVISIONS CONCERNING LABELLING
 - reference to storage conditions; should it be removed?
 - when is labelling on primary or secondary covering appropriate?
 - inclusion of a paragraph on the necessity of traceability
6. 5.0 (old 4.9) UCC/EAN-128 CODIFICATION SYSTEM:
 - revision of the coding system in collaboration with EAN
 - Inclusion of the UN three digit country code
 - revision of the table referring to merchandising criteria (especially sex classification and maturity requirements)
7. 5.1 (old 5.0) SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS
 - inclusion of the pistola cut in this section
 - inclusion of cross-sectional graphics and photographs of cuts
8. ANNEXES (Best Practices)
 - drafting of text and further development of best practices
9. UN/ECE WORLD TRADE STANDARD MARK
 - review and discussion of this issue

Annex II

MEETING OF RAPPORTEURS 13 MAY 1998

1. The Meeting of Rapporteurs was chaired by the Vice-Chairman of the Meeting of Experts on Standardization of Meat, Mr. P. Hardwick (United Kingdom). The Meeting proceeded to divided the Meeting of Rapporteurs into seven sub-groups. It was agreed that the eighth and ninth point identified in the List of Issues to be discussed by the Rapporteurs (Annex I to this report) required input from all Rapporteurs. Each sub-group included several delegations and one person acting as focal point (see list below). All delegations could submit comments or contributions to specific topics to the focal point of the sub-group within the time limit set below. The Group of Rapporteurs agreed on the following time frame:

End July 1998	Delegations should send their comments and contributions to the sub-group focal points.
Mid September 1998	All comments from the Rapporteurs should be sent to the focal points in each sub-group.
October 1998	Meeting of Rapporteurs in Brussels, Belgium
Mid-February 1999	Consolidation of comments and preparation of a final draft by the sub-groups.
3 May 1999	Meeting of Rapporteurs, Geneva, Switzerland
3-5 May 1999	Meeting of Experts, Geneva, Switzerland

Composition of Sub-groups and Focal Points:

Sub-group 1	Australia (focal point), US, Switzerland
Sub-group 2	US (focal point), Australia
Sub-group 3	UK (focal point), Australia, Argentina
Sub-group 4	New Zealand (?)(focal point)
Sub-group 5	France (focal point)
Sub-group 6	UK and EAN International (focal point)
Sub-group 7	pistola cut: France (focal point), Argentina, Australia graphics: US (focal point)
Sub-group 8	all delegations
Sub-group 9	all delegations