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**Economic Commission for Europe****Steering Committee on Trade Capacity and Standards****Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards****Seventy-seventh session**

Geneva, 14–16 (a.m.) November 2022

**Report of the seventy-seventh session of the Working Party  
on Agricultural Quality Standards****I. Introduction**

1. The meeting was chaired by Ms. Agnieszka Sudol (Poland), Chairperson of the Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards (WP.7).
2. The Director of Economic Cooperation and Trade Division of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), Ms. Elisabeth Türk, opened the seventy-seventh session of WP.7, welcoming all delegates and thanking them for their continuous support and engagement. She commended the progress of WP.7 and its Specialized Sections, emphasizing the importance of the standards in facilitating international trade in agricultural produce, and congratulated the Working Party on its important work to reduce food loss and waste in agricultural supply chains.
3. She emphasized that the work of WP.7 makes an important contribution to the international agenda for sustainable development, including Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 2, target 2.3 (by 2030, double the agricultural productivity and incomes of small-scale food producers [...]) and SDG 12, target 12.3 (by 2030, halve per capita global food waste at the retail and consumer levels and reduce food losses along production and supply chains, including post-harvest losses), including through its food loss and waste work. She informed on the capacity-building work on food loss and waste in Serbia (national gap analysis and roadmap), conducted within the United Nations Development Account (UNDA)-funded project on accelerating the transition towards a circular economy in the ECE region and congratulated the Working Party on the development of tools that support this work. She reiterated the commitment of ECE secretariat to the agricultural quality standards work and concluded by thanking delegates for their active engagement in advancing sustainable food systems.

**II. Attendance**

4. Representatives of the following United Nations Member States attended the meeting: Algeria, Australia, Austria, Bahrain, Belgium, Brazil, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Israel, Italy, Morocco, the Netherlands, Panama, Poland, the Russian Federation, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Tajikistan, Türkiye, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Uganda, the United States of America.



5. A representative of the European Commission attended the meeting.
6. The following international organizations and intergovernmental organizations participated in the session: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).
7. Representatives of the following non-governmental organizations, private sector and academia participated in the session: AMV – Servicos e Consultoria Ltd. (Brazil), Central Asian Working Group (CAWG), Chinese Academy of Customs Administration, Embrapa (Brazil), Europe-Africa-Caribbean-Pacific Liaison Committee (COLEACP), Freshfel Europe, Hilfswerk International, International Nut and Dried Fruit Council (INC), Kazakhstan Association of Sugar, Food and Processing Industries, Kazakh research institute of fruit & vegetable growing LLP, Metro (Kazakhstan), Quality Management Center (QMC, Tajikistan), ZHASA AGRO (Kazakhstan).

### **III. Adoption of the agenda (agenda item 1)**

8. The Chair informed that the revision to the provisional agenda was due to the decision by the Bureau to postpone revisions of the standard for cashew nuts to the following session, to be held in 2023.
9. The Working Party adopted the revised provisional agenda as contained in document ECE/CTCS/WP.7/2022/1/Rev.1 without modifications.

### **IV. Matters arising since the last session (agenda item 2)**

#### **(a) United Nations, Economic Commission for Europe and subsidiary bodies**

10. The Director of the Economic Cooperation and Trade Division provided an overview of the achievements of the Working Party over the past years, and of recent and forthcoming intergovernmental meetings and other matters of relevance to the work of the Working Party. Under the Working Party, over 100 standards had been developed. She commended the active engagement of delegations and the tangible impact of their work, noting that at its last meeting in 2021 the Working Party had adopted 18 new and revised standards and recommendations.
11. She informed that the Steering Committee on Trade Capacity and Standards had met on 27 and 28 June 2022 in hybrid mode and had endorsed the standards and recommendations adopted by the Working Party at its 2021 meeting. The online course on agricultural quality standards and food loss reduction in fresh produce supply chains had been finalized and made available on the ECE website at the end of June 2022.
12. During 2023, the seventieth session of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe will be held on 18 and 19 April 2023, followed by the Steering Committee on Trade Capacity and Standards on 26 and 27 June 2023, and the Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards on 13–15 November 2023.
13. Ms. Türk also informed about the work of the secretariat in response to the decision of the sixty-ninth Commission session to intensify efforts to promote a circular economy and sustainable use of natural resources in the region. Under a four-year project on accelerating the transition towards a circular economy in the UNECE region, the secretariat is supporting the Government of Serbia in conducting gap analysis and developing a roadmap on circular economy in the agri-food sector, with a focus on food loss and waste reduction and management. A policy paper on circular economy in agriculture and food was also being prepared, with a focus on food loss and waste reduction and management. Finally, she informed of the theme of the seventieth session of the Commission – Digital and Green Transformations for Sustainable Development in the Region of the Economic Commission for Europe – and invited delegations to consider potential activities by the Working Party in relation to the theme.

## **(b) Recent developments in other organizations**

14. The representative of the OECD Fruits and Vegetables Scheme informed of recent activities, including the development of brochures on root vegetables, green bananas, passion fruit, and berry fruits (published), and cauliflower and papayas (to be finalized in 2023). He also informed about recent and upcoming capacity-building activities, including trainings in the Netherlands, Slovakia and Brazil during 2022; of an e-learning developed by an ad-hoc working group; and of ongoing work on guidelines on pandemics/disruptive events, a study on the impact of the decision by the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to leave the European Union, or “Brexit”, on trade in fruit and vegetables, and a study on the impact of climate change on the quality of fruit and vegetables. He highlighted the complementary nature of the work of ECE and OECD, with ECE developing standards and OECD material that help countries have a uniform interpretation of the standards.

15. The Chair informed that the Codex Secretariat was not able to attend the meeting as the Executive Committee of Codex was meeting on the same day. However, the Codex Secretariat had provided an information note on recent activities of the Codex Alimentarius Commission and its subsidiary bodies on quality standards for fruits and vegetables, which had been made available on the meeting website (ECE/CTCS/WP.7/2022/INF.3).

16. The representative of INC introduced the work and scope of INC, highlighting the reach and impact of the organization, which represents over 860 dried fruit and nut companies spread over 80 countries. He emphasized the reinforced commitment of INC to sustainability and to the SDGs which had resulted in the development of a roadmap of actions towards the achievement of relevant SDGs, focusing on SDGs 2, 5, 12, 13 and 15. INC further stressed the importance of ECE standards for the industry.

17. The Working Party took note of the information provided by partner organizations.

## **V. Capacity-building and promotional activities (agenda item 3)**

18. The secretariat introduced the online e-learning course on agricultural quality standards and food loss reduction in fresh produce supply chains developed under a UNDA COVID-19 response project and made available on the ECE website at the end of June 2022 (<https://unece.org/trade/wp7/e-learning>). It encouraged delegations to increase awareness of the online course.

19. The German delegation informed of the International Meeting on Quality Control of Fruit and Vegetables, to be held in Bonn, Germany, on 14–16 March 2023. It invited all delegates to attend the meeting.

20. The representative of CAWG, which consists of public and private organizations in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, requested the Working Party to organize practical trainings in Central Asia in 2023 on (i) methods and tools for inspections and sampling for fresh fruit and vegetables, and on (ii) methods and tools for inspections and sampling of dry and dried produce. Such training had been requested by producers and processors of fresh and dried fruit and vegetables in the region. The proposed trainees would be representatives of relevant State agencies for standardization and metrology, such as ministries of agriculture and State export agencies, as well as export-oriented small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), exporters, and members of the national technical working groups of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.

21. The Chair of the Specialized Section on Standardization of Dry and Dried Produce informed that the Specialized Section had since 2020 planned to organize workshops on the new sampling plan, but the workshop had been postponed due to COVID-19. At the last session of the Specialized Section, INC had agreed to host such a workshop if no country volunteered.

22. The Working Party took note of the request by the Central Asian Working Group for practical trainings on methods and tools for inspection and sampling of fresh fruit and vegetables and of dry and dried produce.

## **VI. Analysis of the impact of agricultural quality standards on the trade of fruit and vegetables (agenda item 4)**

23. The representative of the OECD Fruit and Vegetables Scheme presented the preliminary results of the joint OECD-ECE study on measuring the impact of marketing standards (ECE/CTCS/WP.7/2022/INF.1). This study was the first attempt by OECD and ECE to quantify the impact of the ECE marketing standards, and results demonstrated a significant and positive impact on trade.

24. The study, which is based on regression analysis at product level, finds that of the 39 categories of fresh fruit and vegetables considered, implementation/revision of ECE standards and publication of OECD fruit and vegetable explanatory brochures are associated with substantial increases in international trade across multiple product categories in the period following revision of a standard and/or issuance of OECD fruit and vegetable explanatory brochures. The study also showed that trade in the products were higher between countries who had adopted the standards than with other countries. Some caveats exist, notably in terms of data availability, which limit the type of analysis that can be made. The study is planned to be finalized and made public in the next few months.

25. The delegation of Sweden said it would be interesting to understand the impact of the quality standards on average value per kilo. The delegate from Brazil asked for the inclusion of text regarding Codex standards, to explain why they were not considered in the study.

26. The Working Party took note of the joint OECD-ECE study to assess the impact of agricultural quality standards on the trade of fruit and vegetables (ECE/CTCS/WP.7/2022/INF.1). It requested the secretariat to publish the study jointly with OECD. The secretariat invited delegations to submit any comments on the study by 15 December 2022.

## **VII. Electronic quality certificates for fresh fruit and vegetables (agenda item 5)**

27. A representative of the Trade Facilitation Section of ECE updated the Working Party on the progress and possible implementation modalities of electronic quality (e-quality) certificates, and related electronic certificates.

28. The functional specifications (i.e. standardized business process) for an electronic certification system for fresh fruit and vegetables (at export) had been finalized, integrating comments received by WP.7 following the discussion at its 2021 session, and published on the ECE website (<https://unece.org/info/Trade/CEFACT/pub/367164>). The work is an output of the collaboration with the United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business (UN/CEFACT) and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) in 2020–2021 under a UNDA project.

29. The functional specifications are now ready to be used by any Government that is interested in developing or enhancing its IT system.

30. The Working Party encouraged interested Governments to consider using the specifications when developing or enhancing their IT systems.

## **VIII. Specialized Section on Standardization of Fresh Fruit and Vegetables (GE.1) (agenda item 6)**

31. The Chairperson of the Specialized Section on Standardization of Fresh Fruit and Vegetables reported on progress over the past year and the outcome of its seventieth session held in May 2022, as reflected in the report of the session (ECE/CTCS/WP.7/GE.1/2022/2).

32. The Specialized Section had developed a standard for certain small fruits (recommended for a one year trial), begun work on developing a new standard on sweet potatoes, revised the standards for pomegranates, asparagus, cherries, and leafy vegetables,

and agreed on revisions to the explanatory brochure on persimmon. It had also set up a working group to review the Standard Layout and a selection of standards from a food loss and waste perspective.

33. As regards future work, the Chairperson of the Specialized Section highlighted continued work on developing a standard on sweet potatoes, revisions to the standards for peas, onions, berry fruits, discussion on the interpretation of pomegranates (OECD brochure), review of the standard for certain small fruits, and continued work to review standards from a food loss and waste perspective.

34. The Working Party thanked the Specialized Section for its excellent work throughout the year. It adopted the following documents:

- Report of the seventieth session of the Specialized Section on Standardization of Fresh Fruit and Vegetables (ECE/CTCS/WP.7/GE.1/2022/2)
- Revised standard for asparagus (ECE/CTCS/WP.7/2022/3)
- Revised standard for cherries (ECE/CTCS/WP.7/2022/4)
- Revised standard for leafy vegetables (ECE/CTCS/WP.7/2022/5)
- Revised standard for pomegranates (ECE/CTCS/WP.7/2022/6)
- Certain small fruits (ECE/CTCS/WP.7/2022/7)
- Revisions to the explanatory brochure on the standard for persimmons (ECE/CTCS/WP.7/2022/8)

## **IX. Specialized Section on Standardization of Dry and Dried Produce (GE.2) (agenda item 7)**

35. The Chairperson of the Specialized Section on Standardization of Dry and Dried Produce reported on progress over the past year and the outcome of its sixty-ninth session held in June 2022, as reflected in the report of the session (ECE/CTCS/WP.7/GE.2/2022/2).

36. The Specialized Section had advanced work on many issues, including the standards on dried persimmons, raw and roasted inshell peanuts, and raw roasted peanut kernels, tabled for adoption at this meeting. It had also agreed on revisions to the Standard Layout for Standards on Dry and Dried Produce. He emphasized the high impact of the Specialized Sections work, as the standards are the de-facto standards used in international trade of nuts and dried produce.

37. As regards future work, the Chairperson of the Specialized Section highlighted the finalization of standards for inshell pecans and for pecan kernels, the explanatory poster on almond kernels, and the alignment of existing standards with the Standard Layout. The Specialized Section also planned to conduct sampling plan workshops, to conduct an ECE-OECD study on impact of dry and dried produce standards on trade, to develop a guidance document similar to the Code of Good Practice to facilitate food loss and waste reduction (SDG 12) in dry and dried produce, and to organize capacity-building events to improve the capacity to use the standards and carry out inspections, including for countries of Central Asia.

38. The Working Party thanked the Specialized Section on Standardization of Dry and Dried Produce for its excellent work throughout the year. It adopted the following documents:

- Report of the sixty-ninth session of the Specialized Section on Standardization of Dry and Dried Produce (ECE/CTCS/WP.7/GE.2/2022/2)
- Standard Layout for Standards on Dry and Dried Produce (ECE/CTCS/WP.7/2022/9)
- Standard for dried persimmons (ECE/CTCS/WP.7/2022/10)
- Standard for raw and roasted inshell peanuts (ECE/CTCS/WP.7/2022/11)
- Standard for raw and roasted peanut kernels (ECE/CTCS/WP.7/2022/12)

- Recommendation for inshell pecans (ECE/CTCS/WP.7/2022/13), extended by one year
- Recommendation for pecan kernels (ECE/CTCS/WP.7/2022/14), extended by one year

## **X. Specialized Section on Standardization of Seed Potatoes (GE.6) (agenda item 8)**

39. The Chairperson of the Specialized Section on Standardization of Seed Potatoes reported on progress and the outcome of its forty-ninth session held in hybrid mode in March 2022, as reflected in the report of the session (ECE/CTCS/WP.7/GE.6/2022/2).

40. The Chairperson of the Specialized Section informed about ongoing and future work, highlighting the revision of the entire ECE Standard for seed potatoes and finalization of the draft guide on minituber production. The Specialized Section was also planning to develop an online webinar series, to create of a knowledge-sharing and resource reference page, and to develop a poster on the benefits of certified seed. She further informed about a survey on lot size and sample size of seed potatoes that was being conducted, and discussions on True Potato Seed and on potato plants in pots, as well as plans to develop a position paper on herbicide carry-over and seed potatoes.

41. The Working Party thanked the Specialized Section on Standardization of Seed Potatoes for its excellent work throughout the year. It adopted the following document:

- Report of the forty-ninth session of the Specialized Section on Standardization of Seed Potatoes (ECE/CTCS/WP.7/GE.6/2022/2)

## **XI. Specialized Section on Standardization of Meat (GE.11) (agenda item 9)**

42. The Chairperson of the Specialized Section on Standardization Meat reported on progress and the outcome of its thirtieth session, held in hybrid mode in September 2022, as reflected in the report of the session (ECE/CTCS/WP.7/GE.11/2022/2).

43. The Specialized Section had over the past year focused on looking at how to increase alignment between the cut codes of the ECE Meat standards and the Harmonized Commodity Description and Coding System (HS) codes of the World Customs Organization (WCO). Following work in a rapporteur's group, it had agreed on a proposal to include HS codes in the ECE Standard for Bovine Meat – Carcasses and Cuts (ECE/CTCS/WP.7/2022/18), as supported by WCO.

44. As part of its annual session, the Specialized Section also held a seminar on Sustainable Meat and Livestock Production. The seminar highlighted the importance of looking at the balance sheet of emissions from agriculture, remarking that the benefits of carbon sequestration in soil were an issue that was not sufficiently discussed and reflected in life-cycle assessments. The Specialized Section agreed that continued dialogue and collaboration were needed on these topics.

45. As regards future work, the Chair highlighted the continuation of work on the alignment between the ECE cut codes and the HS codes, updates on eating quality and on the development of a livestock language, review of the ECE standard for Bovine Meat – Carcasses and Cuts, and digitization of the ECE standard for Bovine Meat – Carcasses and Cuts. The Specialized Section also planned to continue discussions on sustainability issues in the meat sector, in follow-up to the seminar.

46. The Working Party thanked the Specialized Section for its excellent work throughout the year. It adopted the following documents:

- Report of the thirtieth session of the Specialized Section on Standardization of Meat (ECE/CTCS/WP.7/GE.11/2022/2)

- Alignment of the Economic Commission for Europe standards and the Harmonized Commodity Description and Coding System (ECE/CTCS/WP.7/2022/17)
- Proposal for how Harmonized Commodity Description and Coding System codes could be included in the Economic Commission for Europe Standard for Bovine Meat – Carcasses and Cuts (ECE/CTCS/WP.7/2022/18)

## **XII. Sustainable development, food systems and resource efficiency: food loss and waste prevention and reduction (agenda item 10)**

### **(a) Roundtable**

47. The Chair of the Working Party welcomed delegates and speakers to the roundtable on food loss and waste prevention and reduction. She informed that over the past few years, the Working Party has increased its focus on prevention of food loss and waste, in direct support of SDG 12, Target 12.3 on halving food loss by 2030. The work had included the organization of awareness-raising events and the development of studies, tools and guidance documents, including the ECE Code of Good Practice, and a Food Loss and Waste Measuring Methodology for Fresh Produce Supply Chains, as well as the development of Minimum Quality Specifications for Fresh Fruit and Vegetables.

48. The Director of the Economic Cooperation and Trade Division noted that globally around 70 per cent of fresh water, two thirds of nitrogen, and 31 per cent of human-caused greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions are linked to agri-food production. As around a third of all produced food is lost or wasted, this means that a quarter of fresh water and 8–10 per cent of GHG emissions are used to produce food that ends up discarded. Reducing food loss and waste thus offers a triple-win, for environment and climate, for food availability, and for incomes.

49. Mr. Shane Ward, professor of Biosystems Engineering, University College Dublin, presented on food loss and waste prevention and reduction – key issues and policy considerations for increasing resource efficiency and circularity. He stressed importance of taking a system approach, and of focusing on resource use efficiency and reduction of waste, as only unavoidable waste should be the diverted to other purposes. He also stressed that the efficiency of the global food system relies on global trade, and since the market is global, policies put in place in one country could risk worsening global outcomes if they lead to agricultural production moving to locations where it is farmed in a less resource efficient manner.

50. Ms. Camelia Bucatariu, international consultant with FAO, presented on food losses and waste: results and opportunities towards 2030. She shared information on statistics and key concepts in reducing food loss and waste, and on FAO Voluntary Code of Conduct for Food Loss and Waste Reduction, which had been adopted in 2018 and provided internationally recognized nationally adaptable guiding principles and standards for responsible food loss and waste reduction. She also informed about ongoing work by FAO in Europe and Central Asia, Asia and the Pacific and Africa to reduce food loss and waste. In Europe and Central Asia, this had included support to Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan on food loss and waste, including the analysis of national legislation and policies, field surveys and technical support for drafting action plans and strategies at national and local levels.

51. Ms. Zeynep Özkan, Head of European Union Harmonization Department, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Türkiye, presented on food loss and waste prevention activities in Türkiye and the role of logistics. The Government of Türkiye, with the support of FAO, had developed a national action plan and had run a campaign to reduce food loss and waste which had been very successful, with tangible impact on food waste reduction as measured after one year. In collaboration with relevant public and private partners, they had also developed a guide for logistics operators with practical recommendations regarding the handling of goods during transport.

52. Ms. Kristina Mattson, Agricultural Policy Analyst, Swedish Board of Agriculture, presented the ECE “Code of Good Practice: reducing food loss and ensuring optimum handling of fresh fruit and vegetables along the value chain”. She informed about its purpose, target groups, intended usage, and key recommendations, focusing on the importance of training of staff to ensure careful handling, temperature control, ordering, packing and stacking, display and promotion, measuring and identifying alternative outlets.

53. The Chair of the Specialized Section on Standardization of Fresh Fruit and Vegetables informed of ongoing work in the Specialized Section, including the finalization of four leaflets on four groups of vegetables, to complement the Code of Good Practice. Further, he added that for an exporting country like South Africa, temperature management along the supply chain was critical to ensure retained product value and to prevent food loss and waste.

54. The Chair of the Specialized Section on Standardization of Dry and Dried Produce shared information about planned work in the Specialized Section related to food loss. He then invited INC to share information from an industry perspective. The representative of INC highlighted the impacts of climate change on nut production and provided an overview of zero-waste actions in the nut and dried fruits industry.

55. The Chair of the Specialized Section on Standardization of Seed Potatoes informed that it has been estimated that one third of potatoes are lost annually due to pests and diseases. To minimize these losses it is important to use good quality seed potato and to have a certification system. She further informed that seed potatoes that are not sold can be used for other purposes, such as animal feed or biofuels. She concluded by noting that the ECE Standard for Seed Potatoes is the only international standard for seed potatoes and that it brings a lot of benefits.

56. The Chair of the Specialized Section on Standardization of Meat informed that temperature requirements for meat differ and are specific to the type of meat (red vs white, etc.). He highlighted the importance of expediting trade and transit, of ensuring proper labelling of products, and refrigeration at the correct temperature to prevent food loss and waste. He further emphasized the need for measuring waste to be able to manage and account for improvements.

## **(b) Working Party discussion**

57. Several delegations commended the secretariat on the organization of the roundtable.

58. The Chair invited views of delegations on potential future work on food loss and waste under the Working Party and its Specialized Sections.

59. The delegation of Poland informed that the Polish Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development had started a campaign to reduce food loss and waste, which promoted cooperation between industry and public benefit organizations. A conference had been held in Warsaw on 26 October 2022 and was available online in Polish.

60. The delegation of Germany highlighted that the presentations during the roundtable showed the importance of management measures along the value chain and awareness of consumers as main factors to the reduction of food loss and waste. ECE marketing standards seem to be less relevant in this regard. Results from a study in Germany had shown that marketing standards do not contribute to food waste, and are thus not the priority instrument to address food loss and waste. That said, Germany looks forward to the outputs of the working group formed under the Specialized Section on Standardization of Fresh Fruit and Vegetables which has started a review of the standard layout and selected standards to see if there is a possibility to revise some clauses to further reduce the risk of food loss.

61. CAWG informed about its educational initiatives aimed to bring in bioeconomy courses at the university level.

62. COLEACP informed that the organization is addressing food loss and waste alongside beneficiary partners when carrying out work in the field, such as seeking to reduce losses at the production level. COLEACP further informed that all the documents produced by WP.7 were being used by COLEACP in their programmes.



63. The Working Party took note of the hands-on guidance material developed on a pilot basis for four groups of fresh fruit and vegetables (floral vegetables; immature fruit vegetables; leafy vegetables; and root vegetables) to help increase the uptake and use of the Code of Good Practice. It requested the secretariat to finalize and publish the hands-on guidance material, along with the Code of Good Practice in the three official ECE languages.

### **XIII. Preparations for the seventieth session of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (agenda item 11)**

64. The secretariat informed about the cross-cutting theme of the seventieth session of the Commission: “Digital and Green Transformations for Sustainable Development in the Region of the Economic Commission for Europe”, to be held on 18 and 19 April 2023. In line with the decision by the Executive Committee of ECE, the Working Party was invited to discuss potential contributions, action items, and proposals for consideration by the Commission related to the theme of its seventieth session.

65. The Working Party discussed potential issues and contributions to the topic of the Commission session, asking for more guidance on what was meant by the theme. The delegation of Spain informed about the latest modifications on quality standards of fruit and vegetables in order to include provisions about the information lasered on single fruits and vegetables. These provisions are linked to green transformations in marking. Spanish delegation also informed that recently marketing standards of the European Union have been updated according to these provisions. The delegation of Germany suggested that electronic quality certificates could be an area of contribution to the topic. The delegation of Brazil informed that the small fruits were linked to biodiversity and sustainable agroforestry and/or other sustainable and environmentally conscious production systems.

66. The delegation of Poland highlighted the recently decided work on digitization of ECE standards on meat, for which a working group had been formed at the recent session of the Specialized Section on Standardization of Meat. INC informed that in relation to digital, a lot can be done as regards irrigation and that it had been shown that through the use of small sensors water use for growing nuts could be reduced by as much as 20–25 per cent. COLEACP also supported the importance of irrigation and smart agriculture referencing a presentation given at the international training course on harmonization of the fruit and vegetables quality assessment organized by OECD and the Government of Slovakia in September 2022. Since 2020, COLEACP has developed digital tools for their beneficiaries through its e-learning platform.

67. The Working Party took note of the cross-cutting theme of the seventieth session of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, to be held on 18 and 19 April 2023 under the theme “Digital and Green Transformations for Sustainable Development in the Region of the Economic Commission for Europe”. It requested the Bureau to discuss how the Working Party and its subsidiary bodies can contribute to the theme and invited delegations to send proposals to the secretariat by 15 January 2023.

### **XIV. Future work (agenda item 12)**

68. The Working Party decided to include the following items in its future work:

- Continuation of work in Specialized Sections
- Continued work on food loss and waste/SDG 12
- Capacity-building in Central Asia, in response to the request by CAWG
- E-quality: encouraging Governments to use the functional specification
- Review of the Terms of Reference and Working Procedures of the Working Party

69. The delegation of Brazil suggested to discuss the issue of HS codes and the difficulty to access data on product level as data on fresh and dried fruit were under the same HS code.

The Working Party agreed that this issue could be brought to discussion in Specialized Sections.

## **XV. Programme of work of the Working Party for 2023 (agenda item 13)**

70. The secretariat presented the draft annual programme of work of the Working Party for 2023, which was based on the programme of work of the Steering Committee on Trade Capacity and Standards and related decisions and included suggestions for future work agreed during the annual sessions of the Specialized Sections of WP.7.

71. The Working Party adopted the programme of work of the Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards for 2023 (ECE/CTCS/WP.7/2022/20).

## **XVI. Terms of Reference and the Working Procedures of the Working Party (agenda item 14)**

72. The secretariat introduced the item, informing that as per its Terms of Reference, the Working Party shall review its Terms of Reference every five years and submit it for approval to the Steering Committee on Trade Capacity and Standards and the Executive Committee of ECE. With the next revision due for consideration at its 2023 meeting, the Working Party was invited to consider the process for reviewing its Terms of Reference and Working Procedures in preparation for consideration at its seventy-eighth session in 2023. The secretariat also informed that for the 2018 review process an open working group had been set up.

73. The delegation of Sweden, recalling that the discussions for the 2018 revisions had been lengthy, suggested for a working group to be established to develop a proposal for consideration of delegations. The delegation of the United States suggested that the topic be placed on the session agenda of each Specialized Section during 2023. The delegation of Germany supported the idea to set up an open working group which would prepare a draft proposal, which as a second step could be consulted with Specialized Sections.

74. The Working Party decided to set up an open working group consisting of Brazil, Poland, Spain, and the United States of America, to review the Terms of Reference and Working Procedures and prepare a proposal for discussion in the Specialized Sections, followed by consideration by the Working Party at its seventy-eighth session in November 2023.

## **XVII. Other business (agenda item 15)**

75. The secretariat informed that in 2023 all meetings would be in-person. The provisional meeting dates were:

- Specialized Section on Standardization of Seed Potatoes: 16 and 17 March 2023
- Specialized Section on Standardization of Fresh Fruit and Vegetables: 9–11 May 2023
- Specialized Section on Standardization of Dry and Dried Produce: 14–16 June 2023
- Specialized Section on Standardization of Meat: 28 and 29 August 2023
- Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards: 13–15 November 2023

76. The secretariat introduced the Circular Step multistakeholder knowledge-sharing network to support circular economy transition in the ECE region and invited delegations to share information and experts to join the network.

**XVIII. Election of officers (agenda item 16)**

77. The delegations elected Ms. Agnieszka Sudol (Poland) as Chair and Mr. Bucky Gwartney (United States of America) as Vice-Chair.

**XIX. Adoption of the report (agenda item 17)**

78. The Working Party adopted the report of its seventy-seventh session (ECE/CTCS/WP.7/2022/2) in session.

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