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Steering Committee on Trade Capacity and Standards

Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards

Specialized Section on Standardization of Meat

Thirty-first session
Geneva, 28 and 29 August 2023
Item 3 of the provisional agenda
Terms of Reference and Working Procedures
of the Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards
and its Specialized Sections

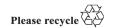
Initial proposals for revisions to the Terms of Reference of the Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards – comparison to the 2018 version

Submitted by the secretariat

Summary

As per its Terms of Reference, the Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards shall review its Terms of Reference every five years and submit them for approval to the Steering Committee on Trade Capacity and Standards and the Executive Committee of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe. With the next revision due for consideration at its 2023 meeting, at its meeting in November 2022 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 consideration by the Working Party at its seventy-eighth session in November 2023.

The first meeting of the open working group was held on 28 February 2023, and included participation of the delegation of Germany. The current document includes the initial proposed revisions discussed at the first meeting of the open working group, as well as additional changes proposed by delegations attending the Specialized Section on Standardization of Fresh Fruit and Vegetables on 9–11 May 2023.



Terms of Reference

- 1. Mission Statement: The Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards develops, interprets and promotes the application of internationally agreed commercial quality standards for meat and eggs, seed potatoes, fresh fruit and vegetables, and <u>for</u> dry and dried produce <u>(dried fruits and nuts)</u>. It also develops and explanatory guidance for <u>the</u> agricultural produce <u>standards</u> to facilitate national and international trade of agricultural products. The Working Party takes account of the needs of Governments and the private sector to deliver the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.
- 2. The Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards (hereinafter referred to as WP.7), acting within the framework of the mandates and policies of the United Nations and the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), and subject to the general supervision of the UNECE Steering Committee on Trade Capacity and Standards, is entrusted with the implementation of the work under the UNECE Trade Sub-programme covering agricultural quality standards, related guidance material, training, and sustainable production and consumption patterns for an inclusive economic growth—, as well as promotion of greater uptake of international standards by countries in order to enable the implementation of internationally harmonized regulatory processes.
- 3. In order to contribute to the The Working Party considers the needs of Governments and the private sector to deliver the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the WP.7 considers the needs of governments, the private sector and consumers. Its The activities of WP.7 along with those of and its Specialized Sections contribute directly to the United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the 2030 and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The WP.7 normative work being primarily of is a primarily technical in nature and complements those of its member countries. [Some of] WP.7 work is carried out undertaken and carried out in partnership with [policy related work undertaken by] other [policy and standard-setting] international bodies, where appropriate.
- 34. The aim of its work is to develop:
 - Market transparency define a common trading language, with minimum quality requirements for agricultural produce that facilitate fair and sustainable trade, prevent reduce technical barriers to trade and contribute to economic growth [SDG 8];
 - Food security <u>Promote promote</u> the sustainable production, <u>trade</u>, and consumption
 of quality agricultural produce, including <u>practices to the prevention of and/or reduce</u>
 food loss (<u>and waste</u>) [SDG 2, 12]; and
 - Collaboration undertake capacity building activities in cooperation with other public and private sector international bodies (in support of the previous two activities) [SDG 17]
- 45. The Working Party operates under the ECE Rules of Procedure and the Guidelines on procedures and practices for ECE bodies, as agreed in Commission Decision A(65).
- <u>56.</u> The Working Party <u>7 is open for participation is open toby</u> all United Nations member Member States in compliance with the accreditation process contained in the guidelines on procedures and practices for ECE bodies (E/2013/37 E/ECE/1464).
- 67. In addition, representatives from rRelevant international organizations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and the private sector, can also be invited as observers [granted observer status], in compliance with the respective relevant United Nations rules and practices in this respect.
- 78. The Working Party defines its working procedures and those of its Specialized Sections.
- 89. The Working Party shall:
 - Develop internationally agreed commercial quality standards for agricultural produce taking into consideration national standards and industry and trade practices for fresh fruit and vegetables (including early and ware potatoes); dry and dried produce (dried fruits and nuts); seed potatoes; meat; and eggs... The Working Party may develops

standards and may develop explanatory guidance, on request from member countries, . However, for other agricultural products, some of this work may be subjected to the availability of resources.

- Revise and amend existing standards to reflect changing production, trading and marketing conditions, taking SDG targets into consideration.
- Undertake activities to harmonize the international application of its standards by developing and disseminating interpretative and guidance material.
- Collect, communicate, and analyse, when necessary, production, trade and inspection
 practices and other areas relevant to sustainable development, implementation and
 promotion of its standards and guidance material.
- Undertake training activities targeted at public and private sector to support sustainable development of agricultural production and trade.
- Promote uniform quality-control procedures, including and the use of a common the
 model quality conformity certificate through the Specialized Sections and in
 cooperation with governmental, inter-governmental and other organizations
 implementing standards to achieve uniformity of inspection methods and
 comparability of results.
- Cooperate with other international organizations and standard-setting bodies that develop and interpret agricultural quality standards for trade facilitation and consumer protection, such as relevant commodity committees of the Codex Alimentarius Commission—(Codex), and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)-Scheme for the Application of International Standards for Fruit and Vegetables (OECD F&V Scheme), to avoid duplication of work and divergence in standards and their interpretation. Ensure that the standard-setting process is consistent with relevant international rules such as those by from the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC).
- Facilitate communication between private and public stakeholder organizations with an interest in the <u>agricultural standards, thereby to providing for the best and modern trade practices in the standard development process that facilitatese a basis for transparenttransparency, along with fair and sustainable trade.</u>

910. The Working Party shall review its Terms of Reference every five years and submit it to-for approval to the Steering Committee on Trade Capacity and Standards and the Executive Committee of the UNECE.