



Economic Commission for Europe

Steering Committee on Trade Capacity and Standards

Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards

Specialized Section on Standardization of Fresh Fruit and Vegetables

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Development of new standards**Proposal by the delegations of Germany and South Africa to
develop a new standard for sweet potato****Submitted by the delegation of South Africa**

The following proposal was submitted for consideration by the Specialized Section.

This document is submitted according to ECE/CTCS/2021/2 Decision 2021-07-02 and Decision 2021-07-07, ECE/CTCS/WP.7/2021/2 paragraph 66, and A/76/6 (Sect.20).

I. Definition of produce

This standard applies to sweet potatoes of varieties (cultivars) grown from *Ipomoea batatas* L. to be supplied fresh to the consumer, sweet potatoes for industrial processing being excluded.

II. Provisions concerning quality

The purpose of the standard is to define the quality requirements for sweet potatoes after preparation and packaging.

However, if applied at stages following export/dispatch, products may show in relation to the requirements of the standard:

- a slight lack of freshness and turgidity
- for products graded in classes other than the “Extra” Class, a slight deterioration due to their development and their tendency to perish.

The holder/seller of products may not display such products or offer them for sale or deliver or market them in any manner other than in conformity with this standard. The holder/seller shall be responsible for observing such conformity.



A. Minimum requirements

In all classes, subject to the special provisions for each class and the tolerances allowed, the sweet potatoes must be:

- intact
- sound; produce affected by rotting or deterioration such as to make it unfit for consumption is excluded
- firm
- clean, that is to say
 - practically free of any visible foreign matter if they are washed
 - practically free of excess dirt and impurities if they are not washed
- practically free from pests
- practically free from damage caused by pests affecting the flesh
- practically free from damage caused by pests and mechanical damage
- free of abnormal external moisture
- free of any foreign smell and/or taste.

The sweet potatoes must be sufficiently developed and display satisfactory maturity.

The development and condition of the sweet potatoes must be such as to enable them:

- to withstand transportation and handling
- to arrive in satisfactory condition at the place of destination.

B. Classification

Sweet potatoes are classified in three classes, as defined below:

(i) “Extra” Class

Sweet potatoes in this class must be of superior quality. They must be characteristic of the variety and/or commercial type.

They must be free from defects, with the exception of very slight superficial defects, provided these do not affect the general appearance of the produce, the quality, the keeping quality and presentation in the package.

(ii) Class I

Sweet potatoes in this class must be of good quality. They must be characteristic of the variety and/or commercial type.

They must be fresh in appearance and not have sprouts.

The following slight defects, however, may be allowed, provided these do not affect the general appearance of the produce, the quality, the keeping quality and presentation in the package:

- a slight defect in shape
- slight defects in colouring
- slight healed cracks
- abrasion on not more than 20 per cent of the tuber area, provided that no sign of progressive development of abrasion and browning is visible
- one dry growth crack with a maximum depth of 2 mm, a maximum length of 25 mm and a maximum width of 3 mm

- one insect damage mark with a maximum depth and diameter of 2 mm
- latex stains with a maximum length of 25 mm and a maximum width of 5 mm
- broken sealed tips with a maximum diameter of 17 mm

The flesh must be sound.

(iii) Class II

This class includes sweet potatoes that do not qualify for inclusion in the higher classes but satisfy the minimum requirements specified above.

The following defects may be allowed, provided the sweet potatoes retain their essential characteristics as regards the quality, the keeping quality and presentation:

- defects in shape
- defects in colouring
- healed cracks
- abrasion on not more than 50 per cent of tuber area: Provided that no sign of progressive development of abrasion is visible
- two dry growth cracks with a maximum depth of 4 mm, a maximum length of 30 mm and a maximum width of 6 mm
- two insect damage marks with a maximum depth and diameter of 4 mm
- latex stains with a maximum length of 20 mm and a maximum width of 3 mm
- sealed broken tips with a maximum diameter of 25 mm
- sprouts with a maximum length of 2 mm are allowed on 10 per cent of the tubers

The flesh must be free from major defects.

III. Provisions concerning sizing

Size is determined by weight.

The minimum weight for all classes is 80 g.

The sweet potatoes in the package should be reasonable uniform.

The largest sweet potato in the package must not be more than thrice [three times] the size of the smallest one.

IV. Provisions concerning tolerances

At all marketing stages, tolerances in respect of quality and size shall be allowed in each lot for produce not satisfying the requirements of the class indicated.¹

A. Quality tolerances

(i) “Extra” Class

A total tolerance of 5 per cent, by number or weight, of sweet potatoes not satisfying the requirements of the class but meeting those of Class I is allowed. Within this tolerance not

¹ A conformity check shall be made by assessing primary or composite samples. It is based on the principle of presumption that the quality of the randomly taken samples is representative of the quality of the lot. The OECD Operating Rules for Conformity Checks are recommended for application – also by operators – at the stages of dispatch as well as in wholesale and distribution centres and storerooms of food retail. <https://www.oecd.org/agriculture/fruit-vegetables/publications/oecd-fruit-and-vegetables-rules.htm>.

more than 0.5 per cent in total may consist of produce satisfying the requirements of Class II quality.

(ii) Class I

A total tolerance of 10 per cent, by number or weight, of sweet potatoes not satisfying the requirements of the class but meeting those of Class II is allowed. Within this tolerance not more than 1 per cent in total may consist of produce satisfying neither the requirements of Class II quality nor the minimum requirements, or of produce affected by decay.

(iii) Class II

A total tolerance of 10 per cent, by number or weight, of sweet potatoes satisfying neither the requirements of the class nor the minimum requirements are allowed. Within this tolerance not more than 2 per cent in total may consist of produce affected by decay.

B. Size tolerances

For all classes a total tolerance of 10 per cent, by number or weight, of sweet potatoes not satisfying the requirements as regards sizing is allowed.

V. Provisions concerning presentation

A. Uniformity

The contents of each package² (or lot for produce presented in bulk in the transport vehicle) must be uniform and contain only sweet potatoes of the same origin, quality, variety and size (if sized).

However, a mixture of sweet potatoes of distinctly different varieties may be packed together in a package, provided they are uniform in quality and, for each variety concerned, in origin. However, in case of those mixtures uniformity in size is not required.

The visible part of the contents of the package² (or lot for produce presented in bulk in the transport vehicle) must be representative of the entire contents.

B. Packaging

Sweet potatoes must be packed in such a way as to protect the produce properly.

The materials used inside the package² must be clean and of a quality such as to avoid causing any external or internal damage to the produce. The use of materials, particularly of paper or stamps bearing trade specifications, is allowed, provided the printing or labelling has been done with non-toxic ink or glue.

Stickers individually affixed to the produce shall be such that, when removed, they neither leave visible traces of glue nor lead to skin defects. Information lasered on single fruit should not lead to flesh or skin defects.

Packages² must be free of all foreign matter.

VI. Provisions concerning marking

Each package² must bear the following particulars, in letters grouped on the same side, legibly and indelibly marked, and visible from the outside:

² These marking provisions do not apply to sales packages presented in packages bearing these particulars. However, they do apply to sales packages (pre-packages) presented individually.

For sweet potatoes transported in bulk (direct loading into a transport vehicle) these particulars must appear on a document accompanying the goods and attached in a visible position inside the transport vehicle.

A. Identification

Packer and/or dispatcher/exporter:

Name and physical address (e.g. street/city/region/postal code and, if different from the country of origin, the country) or a code mark officially recognized by the national authority³ if the country applying such a system is listed in the UNECE database.

B. Nature of produce

- Name of the produce if the contents are not visible from the outside
- Name of the variety (optional)
- “Mixture of sweet potatoes” or equivalent denomination, in the case of a mixture of sweet potatoes of distinctly different varieties.

The name of the variety can be replaced by a synonym. A trade name⁴ can only be given in addition to the variety or the synonym.

C. Origin of produce

- Country of origin⁵ and, optionally, district where grown, or national, regional or local place name.

In the case of a mixture of distinctly different varieties of sweet potatoes of different origins, the indication of each country of origin shall appear next to the name of the variety concerned.

D. Commercial specifications

- Class
- Size (if sized), expressed as minimum and maximum weights

E. Official control mark (optional)

³ The national legislation of a number of countries requires the explicit declaration of the name and address. However, in the case where a code mark is used, the reference “packer and/or dispatcher (or equivalent abbreviations)” has to be indicated in close connection with the code mark, and the code mark should be preceded by the ISO 3166 (alpha-2) country/area code of the recognizing country, if not the country of origin.

⁴ A trade name can be a trademark for which protection has been sought or obtained or any other commercial denomination.

⁵ The full or a commonly used name should be indicated.