
UNECE STANDARD FFV-40

concerning the marketing and
commercial quality control of

RHUBARB

2023 EDITION



UNITED NATIONS
New York and Geneva, 2023

NOTE

Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards

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The present Standard for Rhubarb is based on document ECE/CTCS/WP.7/2017/13, reviewed and adopted by the Working Party at its seventy-third session.

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UNECE standard FFV-40 concerning the marketing and commercial quality control of rhubarb

I. Definition of produce

This standard applies to leaf stalks of rhubarb of varieties (cultivars) grown from *Rheum rhabarbarum* L. to be supplied fresh to the consumer, rhubarb for industrial processing being excluded.

II. Provisions concerning quality

The purpose of the standard is to define the quality requirements for rhubarb 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
- 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 rhubarb must be:

- intact; the leaf blades of rhubarb grown in the open must be cut off neatly no more than 5 cm from the top of the leaf- stalk or the upper part of the stalk may be cut off. The leaf blades of rhubarb grown in forcing houses may be present
- sound; produce affected by rotting or deterioration such as to make it unfit for consumption is excluded
- clean, practically free of any visible foreign matter
- fresh in appearance
- practically free from pests
- practically free from damage caused by pests
- turgid
- smooth and not excessively fibrous
- practically unbruised
- of a colour characteristic of the mode of cultivation
- free of abnormal external moisture
- free of any foreign smell and/or taste.

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

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

B. Classification

Rhubarb is classified in two classes, as defined below

(i) Class I

Rhubarb in this class must be of good quality. It must be characteristic of the variety and/or commercial type in relation to the mode of cultivation.

The leaf-stalks must be well developed and free of patches of rust.

Rhubarb from forcing houses must be straight, free of bud sheathes, deep pink or red in colour for at least two-thirds of the stalk length. Leaf blades, when present, should be undamaged.

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.

(ii) Class II

This class includes rhubarb that does not qualify for inclusion in Class I but satisfies the minimum requirements specified above.

Rhubarb from forcing houses must be pink or red in colour for at least two-thirds of the stalk length.

The following defects may be allowed, provided the rhubarb retains its essential characteristics as regards the quality, the keeping quality and presentation:

- defects in shape
- traces of rust, removable by normal peeling by the consumer
- slight external bruises
- slight surface cracks.

III. Provisions concerning sizing

Size is determined by the length and by the diameter of the leaf-stalks measured at the mid-point of their length.

Minimum size (in cm) by mode of cultivation						
	<i>Rhubarb from forcing houses</i>		<i>Rhubarb forced in the open</i>		<i>Rhubarb grown in the open (without forcing)</i>	
	<i>Length</i>	<i>Diameter</i>	<i>Length</i>	<i>Diameter</i>	<i>Length</i>	<i>Diameter</i>
Class I	25	1.5	20	2.0	25	2.0
Class II	20	1.0	15	1.5	20	1.5

A minimum length is not required for rhubarb presented uniformly in sales packages.

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) Class I

A total tolerance of 10 per cent, by number or weight, of rhubarb 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 rhubarb satisfying neither the requirements of the class nor the minimum requirements, is 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 rhubarb not satisfying the requirements as regards sizing is allowed.

V. Provisions concerning presentation

A. Uniformity

The contents of each package or each bundle in the same package must be uniform and contain only rhubarb of the same origin, variety or commercial type, mode of cultivation and quality.

The visible part of the contents of the package must be representative of the entire contents.

B. Packaging

The rhubarb must be packed in such a way as to protect the produce properly.

The materials used inside the package 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.

Packages must be free of all foreign matter.

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.

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:

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 Code Mark Registry⁴. In the case where there is no street address available, the physical address can be made up of the name of the farm or facility, the nearest village, town, region, and postal code; or GPS coordinates and a PO Box address together with nearest town, region and country shall be accepted as a physical address.⁵

B. Nature of produce

- “Rhubarb” if the contents are not visible from the outside
- “Forced”, where appropriate.

C. Origin of produce

- Country of origin⁶ and, optionally, district where grown, or national, regional or local place name.

D. Commercial specifications

- Class
- Number of bundles, where appropriate.

E. Official control mark (optional)

Adopted 1970

Last revised 2017

Aligned with the Standard Layout 2023

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.

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 See <http://www.unece.org/trade/agr/codemarkregistry.html>.

⁵ Reservation by the United States of America on the use of a PO Box address, as it may not allow facility inspections or rapid intervention in case of recalls, and is not part of its national labelling requirement related to packer and/or dispatcher/exporter.

⁶ The full or a commonly used name should be indicated.