

# codex alimentarius commission



FOOD AND AGRICULTURE  
ORGANIZATION  
OF THE UNITED NATIONS

WORLD  
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Agenda Item 2(b)

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ENGLISH only  
ANGLAIS seulement  
INGLÉS solamente

## JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME

### CODEX COMMITTEE ON FRESH FRUITS AND VEGETABLES

*12<sup>th</sup> Session,  
Mexico City, Mexico, 16 - 20 May 2005*

#### MATTERS ARISING FROM OTHER INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS ON THE STANDARDIZATION OF FRESH FRUITS AND VEGETABLES

#### 51<sup>ST</sup> SESSION OF THE UN/ECE SPECIALIZED SECTION ON STANDARDIZATION OF FRESH FRUITS AND VEGETABLES

(1) This document<sup>1</sup> follows up on matters that have been discussed at both UN/ECE and Codex since the last sessions of the Codex Committee on Fresh Fruits and Vegetables (Mexico City, September 2003) and the UN/ECE Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards (Geneva, November 2004) as well as other matters of interest to the Committee arising from this session. This document should be read in conjunction with CX/FFV 05/12/3 and complemented with CX/FFV 05/12/4 which compiles the current UN/ECE Standards and Recommendations in force.

#### UN/ECE Standard & Recommendation for Apples

(2) The Specialized Section noted that the text of the UN/ECE Recommendation for Apples would finish its trial period in November 2005. The following issues were discussed at the session:

- Sizing: Weight/diameter relationship for the determination of the minimum size and uniformity provisions.
- Maturity requirements.
- List of varieties.

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<sup>1</sup> UN/ECE documentation is available for downloading at the UN/ECE website:  
<http://www.unece.org/trade/agr/meetings/hist2005.htm>

### ***Sizing***

(3) A meeting of the working group on apples had been held led by the delegation of New Zealand who reported on the outcome. The working group recommended adopting the minimum sizes by weight as they stood in the present UN/ECE Recommendation. Concerning uniformity, the working group felt that this was a visual issue, which could be assured more easily by diameter regardless of how the apples had been sized.

(4) The delegation of France said that it was using a sizing table as a tool to ensure uniformity by weight and that it preferred the uniformity requirements for weight to be included in the UN/ECE Standard. It would transmit this table to the next session of the Specialized Section.

(5) After some discussion, the Specialized Section decided to propose to the Working Party to adopt the provisions concerning minimum sizes as in the present UN/ECE Recommendation. The delegation of the European Community said that by the time of the adoption of the text in October, the minimum sizes in the European Community Standard would be aligned with those in the UN/ECE Standard. For this reason, footnote in this regard could be deleted (see CX/FFV 05/12/4, UN/ECE Standard & Recommendation for Apples).

(6) The delegation of New Zealand considered that the footnote containing a reservation from New Zealand, Chile and South Africa could be deleted as minimum sizes by weight had now been introduced in the UN/ECE Standard. The UN/ECE Secretariat would confirm if Chile and South Africa agreed to this change (see CX/FFV 05/12/4, UN/ECE Standard & Recommendation for Apples).

### ***Maturity***

(7) The delegation of the European Commission introduced a document clarifying that it represented the opinion of a large number of Member States and would be voted on shortly. The Delegation explained that the proposal was a response to concerns of producers and trade associations that the harmonization of the minimum sizes for apples in the European Community Standard with those in the UN/ECE Standard could lead to immature produce on the markets. The proposal contained easily applicable maturity requirements to give quality inspectors a tool to remove immature produce from the markets.

(8) The delegation of Copa-Cogeca<sup>2</sup> gave a presentation on their research on maturity and quality of apples that they had done in Italy and Belgium for six different cultivars. It believed that the results of its work indicated a correlation between the size and the Brix value, which meant to them that the current provisions in the UN/ECE Standard were for the time being the most simple and accurate quality parameters. Their research had also shown that the Brix value in apples depended highly on the application of good agricultural practices and it felt that ensuring these on a global level would be more effective in ensuring good quality of apples than regulated minimum Brix values.

(9) The delegation of Copa-Cogeca said that it was difficult to define quality with just one value and that if a minimum Brix level would be included this should take into account the high variability of these values because of seasonal and environmental effects, different varieties and clones. Global historical data would be needed to define the correct values. Different consumer behaviour and appreciation in different regions should also be taken into account. The Delegation stated that the World Apples and Pear Association (WAPA) supported them in their position and concluded that more time was needed for research to define accurate quality parameters for apples (3 years). The representative of Freshfel supported the position of Copa-Cogeca.

(10) A representative of the Deciduous Fruit Producers Trust in South Africa gave a presentation on their research, which had shown that there was only a low correlation of sizes and Brix values for apples at harvest time.

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<sup>2</sup> Committee of Agricultural Organizations in the European Union and General Confederation of Agricultural Cooperatives in the European Union (COPA-COGECA).

(11) The delegation of the European Commission, agreeing that quality was difficult to define, explained that the purpose of their proposal was to define a minimum Brix level below which the fruit was not acceptable any more. From the research shown by the industry it seemed to them that the majority of produce could reach the values they had proposed. It also said that the approach of minimum maturity parameters had proved useful in other UN/ECE standards.

(12) Some delegations supported the position of the industry and felt that more time for study was needed. It was mentioned that for some varieties no data were available and that the sampling procedure and the stage of marketing for testing should be defined.

(13) Other delegations were of the opinion that the introduction of minimum maturity criteria would give quality inspectors an additional tool in the evaluation of lots which they could use in case of doubt as to whether the produce was fit for marketing. They also thought that if this provision would be included in the UN/ECE Standard for a two-year trial period it could be tested in practice and adjusted on the basis of new experience or any new research results at a future session.

(14) The delegation of New Zealand stated that any criteria for maturity should be simple and easily verifiable. The delegation of Poland said that the testing of the Brix value for apples did not need to be done in the centre of the fruit as the Brix level did not vary in different parts of the fruit as much as in other fruit. The Delegation felt that the word "taste" should not be used in the maturity requirements as this could be misleading especially for apples coming out of various storage conditions. However, it agreed that it could remain as an option for quality inspectors to quickly assess the fruit but that in any case other testing would be done before rejecting a lot.

## **Conclusion**

(15) The Specialized Section decided to propose to the Working Party to adopt as a revised UN/ECE Standard the inclusion of a section on minimum quality requirements but without recommending Brix values at present and to adopt as a new UN/ECE recommendation for a two-year trial period (until November 2007) the following addition to the minimum maturity requirements concerning the Brix values to be applied:

### **Part I: UN/ECE Standard for Apples**

#### **B. Minimum maturity requirements**

The apples must be sufficiently developed and display satisfactory ripeness.

The development and state of maturity of the apples must be such as to enable them to continue their ripening process and to reach the degree of ripeness required in relation to the varietal characteristics<sup>1</sup>

In order to verify the minimum maturity requirements, several parameters can be considered (e.g. morphological aspect, taste, firmness and refractometric index)

Footnote 1 concerning the fuji variety = Due to varietal characteristics of the Fuji variety and its mutants concerning maturity at harvest, radial watercore is permitted providing it is contained within the vascular bundles of each fruit (unchanged).

### **Part II: UN/ECE Recommendation for Apples**

Amend the last epigraph in Section B. Minimum maturity requirements to read:

In order to verify the minimum maturity requirements, several parameters can be considered (e.g. morphological aspect, taste, firmness and refractometric index) and, if the refractometric index of the flesh is measured, the Brix degree must be greater than or equal to 9°. However, for the varieties Annurca, Cripps Pink, Fuji, Golden Delicious, Pinova, Rafzubex, Rafzubin, and their mutants, this value must be greater than or equal to 10°.

(16) Having taken that decision, the Specialized Section stressed the importance of testing these requirements in practice and urged the industry to continue studies on quality parameters for apples so that the decision after the trial period could be taken on the basis of sufficient data.

### ***List of varieties***

(17) At the last session, a number of varieties were accepted provisionally. Since then no new information had been received from the applying countries (Turkey and Lithuania). As a number of questions remained concerning these varieties (e.g. Rubin, Forele) the Specialized Section asked the UN/ECE Secretariat to write to the countries requesting them to fill in the template for updating the list of varieties for apples for each variety concerned. The deadline for submitting this information was set at 1 October 2005 so that answers could be reviewed before the Working Party session. The Chairperson of Specialized Section would then, at that session, recommend how to proceed with these varieties.

### **Proposal from France to the Codex Working Group on Apples**

(18) The delegation of France reported that it had proposed to the Codex Working Group on Apples to adopt the same maturity requirements that had been proposed by the European Commission Services, as well as a simplification of the minimum sizing requirements. It said that the Codex Working Group on Apples had not retained these proposals. The Specialized Section was of the opinion that these proposals could be studied at a future session.

### ***Experiences with the template for requesting inclusion of apple varieties***

(19) At the last session an updated version of the template was created (see CX/FFV 05/12/3, paras. 30 - 33). Delegations were invited to report on their experiences with the template and to decide if templates for other products should be created.

(20) There was a long discussion on this issue and delegations agreed that only varieties of commercial importance for international trade should be included in the UN/ECE Standard, as the main goal of the standards was to facilitate exchanges between countries. Therefore, the criteria for including varieties should be more clearly defined in the UN/ECE Standard and the template than at present. The trade volume either as a certain percentage of international trade or x tonnes was mentioned.

(21) The Specialized Section was of the view that not only new varieties proposed for inclusion should be considered but also that the existing list for apples was too long. It was mentioned that the fact that a variety was not included in the list did not prevent it from being traded.

(22) The delegation of France said that it was also a possibility to amend the UN/ECE standards so that the lists would be simplified as a consequence as had been done in the case of table grapes, where an amendment to the UN/ECE standard had led to the deletion of a list.

(23) The delegation of the United Kingdom offered to coordinate efforts to simplify the list for apples. It invited all delegations to send by December 2005 a list of a maximum of 30 varieties that they considered most important and that should remain in the list. The United Kingdom would prepare a new proposal for the 2006 session of the Specialized Section on the basis of the lists received (see Annex for the Template).

### **UN/ECE Standard for Table Grapes**

(24) The French delegation introduced the proposal that was forwarded to the Codex Working Group on Table Grapes. The proposal contained major simplifications of the UN/ECE Standard:

- Only two levels of maturity requirements for Brix values and one level for sugar/acid ratio which means that no list of varieties with maturity requirements is necessary.
- Only one minimum weight for all varieties – which means that the exhaustive list of small-berried varieties could be deleted.

(25) Most delegations were in favour of the proposed maturity requirements as a much simpler solution than having a list with all varieties and maturity requirements, which would be difficult to maintain and to control.

(26) The delegation of Chile felt that the Brix levels and sugar/acid ratio proposed were rather low but could agree to the approach of having Brix levels listed by groups of varieties.

(27) It was clarified by other delegations that the maturity requirements in the UN/ECE standards should only define a minimum level of quality. Usually the values reached by grapes in trade were much higher than the values proposed.

(28) The representative of the Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Programme informed that the proposal of the Codex drafting group followed the guidelines given to the group at the last session of the Codex Committee on Fresh Fruit and Vegetables, which were to establish a list of maturity requirements by variety and a list of small-berried varieties based on the list contained in the UN/ECE Standard. Thus, the French proposal had not been retained in the proposal of the working group but was contained in the background information in document CX/FFV/05/12/7.

(29) The delegation of Hungary clarified that its document had been a contribution to the original South African paper and that beyond maturity requirements it also contained some amendments to the list of varieties. The delegation of Switzerland also proposed a correction to the list of varieties.

### **Conclusion**

(30) The Specialized Section decided to propose the amendments to the maturity requirements, as contained in the French proposal (see below), to the Working Party for adoption for a two-year trial period (up to November 2007) and to amend the list of varieties as proposed by Hungary and Switzerland.

#### **B. Minimum maturity requirements**

The table grapes must be sufficiently developed and display satisfactory ripeness.

In order to satisfy this requirement, the fruit must have attained a refractometric index of at least:

- 14°Brix for all seedless varieties,
- 13° Brix for all other varieties.

In addition all varieties must have a minimum sugar/acid ratio of 18:1.

**Note by the UN/ECE Secretariat:** The changes to the list of varieties have already been implemented in the standard on the UNECE website as they do not have to be confirmed by the Working Party.

(31) The Specialized Section also decided to discuss the simplification of the sizing provisions and the possible deletion of the list of small-berried varieties at the next session.

### **Control Certificate/UNeDocs**

(32) At the last session of the Working Party a working group was formed to align the present UN/ECE control certificate with the UN Layout Key (defining format and semantics) in line with the UNTDED (United Nations Trade Element Data Directories) (see CX/FFV 05/12/3, paras. 50 - 53).

(33) The working group reported that a meeting with a representative of UN/CEFACT and SITPRO (a government-funded organization in the United Kingdom with the goal of simplifying trade procedures) had been held earlier this year. At that meeting, the problems with the present control certificate had been reviewed:

- No possibility to add continuation sheets to add more products on one certificate; the need to have such a sheet has led countries to use solutions that are not harmonized;
- No field for a unique consignment reference to link consignments and control certificate;
- Not harmonized with the UN Layout Key for trade documents. Harmonization with the layout key would harmonize the certificate with many other documents used in trade which share common data fields thus facilitating the use of the certificate and also preparing the document for use in UNeDocs and other electronic business applications.

(34) Following the meeting, SITPRO created a new form, which was aligned with the UN Layout Key and had the possibility to add continuation sheets.

(35) The Specialized Section welcomed the proposal and made a number of suggestions for amendments to clarify/rephrase some boxes. It was suggested to work together with UNeDocs and the World Customs Organization on the possibilities for using a code for the produce and the class which would make it possible to automate the form across language barriers. A field for a seal or stamp should be included on the continuation sheet. Some delegations said that they would like to discuss the new form with their inspectors.

(36) The Specialized Section invited the United Kingdom to collect any further comments and to prepare a new version of the form, and to transmit it to the Working Party for discussion and adoption. The information on the new form should also be transmitted to Codex and the OECD Scheme so that in the future one harmonized form could be used. The UN/ECE Secretariat was invited to hold further discussions with UN/CEFACT to see how the form could be integrated in electronic business applications.

## **UN/ECE Standard Layout for Fresh Fruits and Vegetables**

### **Point of application of UN/ECE Standards**

(37) The Specialized Section noted that UN/ECE standards were applied at different stages of marketing and also in some countries for national trade. The revised UN/ECE Standard for Kiwi Fruit in the minimum maturity requirements makes explicit reference to stages following dispatch.

(38) On the other hand, the Geneva Protocol and each UN/ECE standard contained the provision that “*The purpose of the standard is to define the quality requirements of <PRODUCE NAME> at the export control stage, after preparation and packaging.*”

(39) At earlier sessions, different Specialized Sections and the Working Party discussed the possibility of reflecting this by deleting reference to the export control stage.

(40) The proposal by Germany was based on the relevant European Community regulations and contained the deletion of reference to the export control stage, a paragraph allowing a slight deterioration and loss of freshness in stages following dispatch and a paragraph about the application of the UN/ECE standard at all marketing stages and the obligation for the holder not to market products unless in conformity with the UN/ECE standard.

(41) There was a lengthy discussion following this proposal. All delegations acknowledged the fact that UN/ECE standards were applied in different stages of marketing but there was no consensus on deleting the reference to the export control stage or to the inclusion of paragraphs as suggested by Germany. It was felt that including further provisions in the UN/ECE standards might make their application more difficult rather than facilitating them.

(42) Delegations generally agreed that UN/ECE standards were essentially technical and therefore should contain only provisions related to the produce and not to their application. This could be dealt with in the Geneva Protocol.

(43) The Specialized Section invited delegations to consider this question and to send any comments to the UN/ECE Secretariat. The Specialized Section also felt that the other specialized sections and the working group on the terms of reference should examine this issue. The UN/ECE Secretariat would prepare a new proposal for the Working Party based on any comments received and the discussions held in other Specialized Sections.

### Request for updating the list of varieties of the UN/ECE Standard for Apples FFV 50

**NOTE:** The list of varieties is a non-exhaustive list. Fruits of varieties that are not part of the list may be marketed and should be graded according to their varietal characteristics. Only those varieties that are of economic importance in international trade and show red colouring, are large fruited and/or show russetting characteristics should be included in the list.

ALL INFORMATION REQUESTED IS IMPORTANT TO BE ABLE TO INCLUDE THE VARIETY AT THE CORRECT PLACE IN THE LIST. MISSING INFORMATION WILL DELAY THE INCLUSION.

Please send the completed form to:

United Nations Economic Commission for Europe,  
Trade Development and Timber Division, Agricultural Standards Unit, Office 432  
Palais des Nations, 1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland  
Email: [agristandards@unece.org](mailto:agristandards@unece.org)

<b>1. Applicant</b> (name and address of the ministry or official control authority as well as a contact person of the country applying for amendment or addition of the list of varieties).	
<b>2. Name of the variety</b>	
<b>3. Parentage</b> (varieties from which the new variety was bred)	
<b>4. Breeder</b> (name of breeder of the variety – company or other)	
<b>5. Synonyms (if known)</b>	
<b>6. Trademarks (if known)</b> (Trademark names are mentioned in the list of varieties to ensure correct quality control Evidence of ownership of any applicable patent or trademark regarding the variety as well as the countries for which the protection has been obtained should be attached to the form).	
<b>7. Breeders description of the variety</b>	
<b>8. Economic importance in international trade</b> (e.g. production volume or other justification)	
<b>9. Colour group</b> (for varieties showing red colouring, please mark the appropriate colour group (see Annex of the standard for further explication)).	A
	B
	C
<b>10. Russetting</b> (indicate if the variety shows a characteristic russetting of the skin, which will be beyond those limits set in the table of the annex of the standard)	Russetting
	No russetting
<b>11. Size group</b> (indicate if the variety is large fruited taking into account the minimum sizes determined in chapter III PROVISIONS CONCERNING SIZING)	Large fruited
	Not large fruited