

codex alimentarius commission



FOOD AND AGRICULTURE
ORGANIZATION
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Agenda Item 2(b)

CX/FFV 02/3
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**JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME
CODEX COMMITTEE ON FRESH FRUITS AND VEGETABLES**

*10th Session,
Mexico City, Mexico, 10-14 June 2002*

**MATTERS OF INTEREST RELATED TO THE STANDARDIZATION OF FRESH FRUITS AND
VEGETABLES ARISING FROM OTHER INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS**

This document is divided into two parts: Part I refers to the UN/ECE work in the field of standardization of fresh fruits and vegetables and Part II to the activities of the OECD Scheme for the Application of International Standards for Fruit and Vegetables.

A. UNITED NATIONS ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE (UN/ECE)

1. Main issues of concern to the Codex Committee on Fresh Fruits and Vegetables that were discussed at the 47th and 48th Sessions of the Specialized Section on Standardization of Fresh Fruits and Vegetables (Geneva, Switzerland, 15-18 May 2001 and 23-26 April 2002 respectively) and the 56th and 57th Session of the Working Party on Standardization of Perishable Produce and Quality Development (Geneva, Switzerland, 6-8 November 2000 and 12-14 November 2001 respectively) are summarized below.

UN/ECE STANDARD FOR CITRUS FRUITS

56th Session of the Working Party

2. The Working Party adopted the UN/ECE Standard for Citrus Fruits¹ as revised by the 46th Session of the Specialized Section and amended by the Working Party. The Working Party noted that the document represented a good progress over the earlier Standard even though several reservations remained in the text concerning maturity requirements and green skinned oranges. The Working Party was informed of a research being done in Spain on maturity requirements and taste for several varieties of clementines and oranges. More detailed information would be provided to the 47th session of the Specialized Section.²

47th Session of the Specialized Section³

3. The Specialized Section did not discuss the Standard since no document was received. Therefore, it decided to put this item on the agenda of its next session.

48th Session of the Specialized Section⁴

4. The Specialized Section considered the Standard and made the following amendments:

Sizing

5. The Specialized Section agreed to use "1" alternatively to "1-x" for soft citrus and to allow sizing by count.

Consumer Packages

6. The Specialized Section agreed to allow mixed packing of different species while clarifying that additionally to the marking of the species contained, all other marking requirements that existed for the individual species had to be observed.

Maturity Requirements

7. The Delegation of Spain reported on a research project on sensory acceptance for citrus fruit aimed at establishing a relationship between taste and objective parameters for determining quality. The Specialized Section encouraged the continuation of this work as well as the preparation of a proposal with a view to amending the Standard at its next session.

Proposal to the Working Party

8. The Specialized Section agreed to forward the revised text to the 58th Session of the Working Party for adoption as revised UN/ECE Standard.

UN/ECE STANDARD FOR APPLES AND PEARS

56th Session of the Working Party⁵

9. The Working Party adopted the UN/ECE Standard for Apples and Pears⁶ as proposed by the 46th Session of the Specialized Session.

47th Session of the Specialized Section⁷

10. The Specialized Section discussed drafts for separated standards for apples and pears and considered a proposal to size apples by weight. It agreed to continue to work on the inclusion of weight sizing especially concerning minimum weights and tolerances. The Specialized Section further agreed that the Standard together with the List of Varieties would be revised in light of the changes and comments made at the session for consideration by the next session of the Specialized Section. Other changes of an editorial nature were also made.

¹ TRADE/WP.7/2000/11/Add.3

² TRADE/WP.7/2000/11, paras. 21-26

³ TRADE/WP.7/GE.1/2001/19, para. 54

⁴ Report of the 48th Session of the Specialized Section on Standardization of Fresh Fruits and Vegetables, paras. 38-51

⁵ TRADE/WP.7/2000/11, paras. 14-16

⁶ TRADE/WP.7/2000/11/Add.1

⁷ TRADE/WP.7/GE.1/2001/19, paras. 20-44

Proposed Draft Codex Standard for Apples

11. The Specialized Section noted that at the last session of the Codex Committee on Fresh Fruits and Vegetables it was proposed that the Specialized Section undertook the development of the Proposed Draft Codex Standard for Apples. This method of cooperation was included as an option in the Codex Procedural Manual but the proposal was not agreed to by the Committee.

12. The delegate of the Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Programme explained that according to the Terms of Reference of the Codex Committee on Fresh Fruits and Vegetables, the Specialized Section might prepare proposed draft standards for fresh produce at the request of the Committee but the final decision rested with the CCFFV. It was noted that many countries participating in the Specialized Section were also members of the CCFFV's drafting groups on apples, table grapes and tomatoes.

13. The Specialized Section agreed that it was necessary to come to a harmonized standard but recognized that this would take time. The Codex Committee would be informed of the work at UN/ECE through cooperation of the secretariats, participation of the same delegations in working/drafting groups as well as the presentation of the report of this session at the next session of the CCFFV. It was also agreed that no formal proposals would be transmitted to the Codex Committee before the items in question had been conclusively discussed in UN/ECE.

48th Session of the Specialized Section⁸

14. The Specialized Section revised the Standard as follows:

List of Varieties for Apples

15. The Specialized Section updated the List of Varieties and agreed to forward it to the 58th Session of the Working Party for adoption as an annex to the UN/ECE Standard.

Sizing by Weight - Apples

16. Several delegations were of the opinion that the minimum weight proposed was not sufficient to exclude immature apples from the market and that objective maturity requirements were needed. Other delegations entered a reservation to the fact that the minimum size in diameter had been maintained without any alternative minimum size in weight and asked for further work to allow for the inclusion of separate minimum requirements for weight sizing.

Proposal to the Working Party

17. The Specialized Section agreed to forward the revised text to the 58th Session of the Working Party for adoption as a new UN/ECE Standard for Apples together with the List of Varieties previously agreed (see para. 11 above).

Publication Issues

18. The new UN/ECE Standards for Apples and Pears would be numbered as FFV-50 and FFV-51 respectively. Consequently the existing combined UN/ECE Standard FFV-01 would be deleted from the list of standards.

UN/ECE STANDARD FOR TABLE GRAPES

56th Session of the Working Party⁹

19. The Working Party adopted the UN/ECE Standard for Table Grapes as revised by the 46th Session of the Specialized Section and amended by the Working Party.

47th Session of the Working Party¹⁰

20. The Specialized Section revised the UN/ECE Standard for Table Grapes with particular regard to Maturity Requirements and Bunch Weight as follows:

Maturity Requirements

21. The Specialized Section had an exchange of views on how to approach the inclusion of Brix levels as a maturity parameter in the Standard. It was mentioned that the inclusion of Brix values only made sense if it was done by variety or groups of varieties since a given minimum Brix value might be an acceptable marketing quality for certain varieties while not for others. Therefore, setting Brix values without taken this fact into account might lead to the marketing of immature grapes which nevertheless fulfilled the criteria of the Standard. It was also mentioned that the Brix level was not a good indicator of the maturity for many grapes and that both minimum Brix level and sugar/acid ratio should be included in the Standard according to different groups of varieties as indicators of maturity.

⁸ Report of the 48th Session of the Specialized Section on Standardization of Fresh Fruits and Vegetables, paras. 18-32

⁹ TRADE/WP.7/2000/11, paras. 31-34

¹⁰ TRADE/WP.7/GE.1/2001/19, paras. 84-94

22. It was therefore agreed that, as a starting point, a minimum refractometric index be established for the Alphonse Lavallee, Cardinal and Victoria varieties (12° Brix) as well as for seeded (13° Brix) and seedless (14°Brix) varieties. A Working Group would work on the following:

- definition of satisfactory Brix and sugar/acid ratio levels depending on the variety with the goal of identifying groups of varieties for which the same levels could be acceptable and,
- review of methods for sampling and measurement of the above indexes.

Bunch Weight for Late Harvest Grapes

23. The Specialized Section agreed to amend Class I to allow late harvest grapes (varieties Barlinka, La Rochelle and Dauphine) to be traded as such. The Specialized Section was informed that these varieties fulfilled all the requirements for this class except for the bunch weight (100 g instead of 150 g required in this class for large berry varieties). The sizing provisions and the commercial specifications were amended accordingly. It was indicated that other varieties might be concerned as well.

57th Session of the Working Party¹¹

24. The Working Party adopted the proposed text, integrating maturity requirements as well as a lower minimum size for special late harvest varieties, for a two-year trial period as a UN/ECE Recommendation. It agreed to discuss the mention of trademarks in the list of varieties again at its next session (see paras. 51-59).

48th Session of the Working Party¹²

25. The Specialized Section revised the UN/ECE Standard for Table Grapes as follows:

Simplification of the Annex

26. The Specialized Section noted the only those varieties for which special provisions applied should be listed in the Annex. It agreed to delete List II (a) from the Annex and to amend the heading of the second column in the Table on Sizing to read "all varieties excluding small-berry varieties listed in the table". Consequently, the last sentence in the Section on Sizing stating "*Where the name of the variety on the marking does not appear on the list in the Annex hereto, the minimum weight for large-berry varieties is required*" was removed. This amendment was made on the understanding that any variety might be included again in the Standard if necessary, account being taken of the specific maturity requirements of the variety.

27. The Specialized Section also noted that all varieties could be grown under glass and therefore, it was not necessary for quality control to list any variety in List I of the Annex, being the marking "underglass" sufficient for this purpose. In view of this, it agreed to delete List I from the Annex and to amend the heading of the first column in the Table on Sizing to read "table grapes grown under glass if indicated". In addition, the title of the Annex was amended to read "Exhaustive list of small-berry varieties".

Minimum Weight

28. The Specialized Section considered whether or not the requirement on minimum weight of 75g for bunches not satisfying the size requirements should apply to bunches used for adjusting the weight of consumers packages. In this regard, it was noted that the present provisions on sizing allowed to adjust the weight of certain consumer packages with one bunch not satisfying the required minimum weight while provisions on tolerances for bunches not satisfying the size requirements established that they should not weight less than 75 g. The Specialized Section decided that there should be no minimum weight for bunches used for adjusting the weight. In consequence, the Standard was amended as follows:

- The paragraph concerning consumer packages was deleted from the provisions concerning sizing, and
- A new Section IV.B (iii) was added as follows "*For all classes: in each package for direct sale to the consumer not exceeding 1 kg net weight, one bunch weighing less than 75 g is allowed to adjust the weight, provided the bunch meets all other requirements of the specified class.*"

Maturity Requirements

29. The Specialized Section agreed to continue to work on a list on acceptable Brix levels for all varieties mentioned in the Annex to the Standard account being taken of the changes made to the Standard.

Late Harvest Grapes

30. The Specialized Section decided to include two new varieties (Bonheur and Sunred Seedless) to the footnote concerning late harvest grapes.

¹¹ TRADE/WP.7/2001/9, para. 32

¹² Report of the 48th Session of the Specialized Section on Standardization of Fresh Fruits and Vegetables, paras. 82-99

Sampling Method

31. The Specialized Section agreed on a sampling and Brix value testing for determining maturity indicators for table grapes. According to the separation of work between UN/ECE and OECD, this document was forwarded to the OECD Scheme.

Proposal to the Working Party

32. The Specialized Section agreed that the existing Standard should be amended regarding the Annex and Minimum Weight. The text would be recommended to the Working Party for adoption as a revised UN/ECE Standard. The existing Recommendation should be amended as the Standard above and additionally include the amendments to the footnote concerning late harvest varieties. It would be proposed to the Working Party to extend the trial period for this Recommendation for one more year.

UN/ECE STANDARD FOR TOMATOES**56th Session of the Working Party¹³**

33. The 56th Session of the Working Party adopted the UN/ECE Standard for Table Grapes as revised by the 46th Session of the Specialized Section and amended by the Working Party.

UN/ECE STANDARD FOR PINEAPPLES**47th Session of the Specialized Section¹⁴**

34. The Specialized Section had an exchange of views on the trade of pineapples without crown. The delegation of the Ivory Coast said that 64% of world trade in fresh pineapple were between Africa and Europe and 55% of pineapples were produced in this country. The delegate stated that the aspect of the crown was important to the consumer while protecting the fruit against infections, rotting and mechanical damage. Pineapples without crown were only traded for processing.

35. Several delegations felt that in order for UN/ECE standards to be truly international they would have to take all world trade into account. Other delegations stated that UN/ECE Standard should be aligned with the Codex Standard to allow trade of pineapples without the crown and that in their countries this type of pineapples were marketed for direct consumption.

36. The Delegation of the European Community said that there were not European rules on trade of pineapples without the crown but that the market did not ask for this produce. He felt that more data on trade without the crown were needed. The Delegation of Chile supported this view stating that it would be interesting to have data on shelf-life of pineapples with or without the crown to decide if the differences were as big as for e.g. cherries.

37. The delegate of the Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Programme said that the existing Codex Standard for Pineapples had been revised following a request of COLEACP¹⁵. During the revision the question of the crown had been discussed extensively. In order to be flexible to reflect world trade it had been decided to allow pineapples to be traded with or without the crown. Countries wishing to propose changes to the Codex Standard could do so in the CCFFV. The Draft UN/ECE Standard for Pineapples should be harmonized with the Codex Standard.

38. The Specialized Section noted that the Terms of Reference of the Working Group responsible for the drafting of the Proposed Draft UN/ECE Standard for Pineapples stated that each proposed change to the existing Codex Standard should be identified and justified.

48th Session of the Specialized Section¹⁶

39. The Specialized Section considered a document highlighting the differences between the Codex Standard for Pineapples and the draft UN/ECE Standard for Pineapples as follows:

Crown

40. The draft UN/ECE Standard was by default traded with the crown intact (which could be reduced through an ablation process before harvest or trimmed by cutting outer leaves of the crown) and its removal was allowed as an option to be specified by the purchaser and to be marked explicitly. In the Codex Standard both options were on an equal footing.

¹³ TRADE/WP.7/2000/11, paras. 38-39

¹⁴ TRADE/WP.7/GE.1/2001/19, paras. 104-116

¹⁵ Comité de liaison Europe-Afrique-Caraïbes-Pacifique

¹⁶ Report of the 48th Session of the Specialized Section on Standardization of Fresh Fruits and Vegetables, paras.107-115

Colouring

41. The draft UN/ECE Standard contained optional provisions concerning classification by exterior colouring which were not contained in the Codex Standard.

Sizing

42. The draft UN/ECE contained additional sizing provisions to allow sizing by count per box. It was proposed that instead of including any specific regional sizing method in the Standard, only a minimum size should be included while allowing variation in a package to guarantee uniformity. A solution concerning the sizing issue was found in a working group and included in the final text of the Standard.

Method to increase storage life of pineapples for sea export

43. The Specialized Section agreed to include a footnote allowing a new method of marketing pineapples in response to special market demand. Marking provisions would be included at a later stage. It was noted that marketing pineapples with the stem intact increased the keeping quality so that transport by sea (3 weeks) became possible.

Proposal to the Working Party

44. The Specialized Section agreed to forward the document to the 58th Session of the Working Party as a UN/ECE Recommendation for Pineapples for adoption for a one-year trial period.

UN/ECE STANDARD FOR AVOCADO**56th Session of the Working Party¹⁷**

45. The Working Party adopted the proposed text as a UN/ECE Recommendation for a two-year trial period.

47th Session of the Working Party¹⁸Maturity Requirements

46. The Specialized Section recalled that at its last session several delegations stressed that a minimum level of dry matter content achieved at harvest should be defined in the Standard to ensure acceptable ripening and that maturity requirements should not be used to distinguish quality classes. A proposal of the European Community was adopted in this respect.

47. The Specialized Section agreed to propose the integration of the amendments made at this session into the existing UN/ECE Recommendation for Avocados to the Working Party and test them for the remaining year of the trial period.

57th Session of the Working Party¹⁹

48. The Working Party noted that the UN/ECE Recommendation for Avocados was in a trial period until 2002. It recalled that this Recommendation allowed trade of smaller sizes of fruit of the variety Hass.

48th Session of the Specialized Section²⁰

49. The Specialized Section amended the Recommendation as follows:

- To exclude antillian varieties from the scope of the standard because they are inherently different (this had already been commented by COLEACP at the last session).
- To include requirements for the maturity of the fruit which are at present in the minimum requirements in the section "Maturity" and consequently to delete the text presently in that section.
- Reduce the minimum weight for the Hass variety to 80 g and increase the maximum difference between the smallest and the largest fruit within a package to 25 g for size "S".
- To align the layout of the provisions concerning sizing with the standard layout.

Proposal to the Working Party

50. The Specialized Section agreed to propose to the Working Party to extend the trial period for the amended Recommendation for one further year.

¹⁷ TRADE/WP.7/2000/11, para. 40

¹⁸ TRADE/WP.7/GE.1/2001/19, paras. 45-51

¹⁹ TRADE/WP.7/2001/9, paras. 27-31

²⁰ Report of the 48th Session of the Specialized Section on Standardization of Fresh Fruits and Vegetables, paras. 33-37

USE OF TRADEMARKS IN UN/ECE STANDARDS

51. The issue concerns to fruit marketed under a trade mark name. A trade association had complained to UN/ECE that the standards proposed by the Working Party allegedly "misuse certain registered trademarks without authorization as synonyms for varietal names on packaging." Other producers and trade associations have lodged similar complaints. In order to resolve the problem, the UN/ECE Secretariat consulted with the Office of Legal Affairs in appropriately formulating two proposed options for listing varietal names in UN/ECE standards for fresh fruits and vegetables.

52. The 57th Session of the Working Party considered these proposals as follows:²¹

- the first, maintaining the present two column list of varieties and other names with the inclusion of trademarks in endnotes to the relevant varieties;
- the second, adding a third column and including trademark names there.

53. The Working Party decided to follow the second version because the first would become too complicated for lists which contain many trademarks. However, for practical reasons, e.g. in the case of a reduced number of trademarks involved, the specialized sections may consider the first version, with footnotes rather than endnotes for specific standards.

54. The Working Party also decided that the Standard Layout should contain provisions for the list of varieties. It further decided that (based on the second version) the text clarifying the distinction between trademarks and varieties should be included at the beginning of these provisions and read as follows:

“Introductory note: Some of the varieties listed in the following may be marketed under names for which trademark protection has been sought or obtained in one or more countries.

Names known by the United Nations to be trademarks for such varieties are not included in the list of varieties (first column) nor in the list of other names by which such variety may be known (second column). References to trademark names have been included (third column) for informational purposes only.”

55. The Working Party agreed further that a disclaimer (possibly in a footnote) would be added to state the position of the United Nations:

“Disclaimer:

(1) Some of the varietal names listed in the first column may indicate varieties for which patent protection has been obtained in one or more countries. Such proprietary varieties may only be produced or traded by those authorized by the patent holder to do so under an appropriate license therefor. The United Nations takes no position as to the validity of any such patent or the rights of any such patent-holder or its licensee regarding the production or trading of any such variety.

(2) The United Nations takes no position as to the validity of any such trademarks or the rights of any such trademark owners or their licensees to mark such varieties under such trademarks.

(3) The United Nations endeavoured to ensure that no trademark names are listed in the following. However, it is the responsibility of any trademark owner to notify the United Nations promptly if a trademark name has been included in the following listing and to provide the United Nations with an appropriate varietal, or generic, name for the variety as well as adequate evidence of the validity of any applicable patent or trademark regarding such variety.”

56. The Working Party decided further that (based on the second version) the column headings of the list varieties should be as follows:

Variety	Other names by which the variety is known	Known trademarks which may only be used under license
...

57. The Working Party discussed the question if trademark names could be used (by trademark holders) to fulfil the marking requirement under VI B. (Nature of Produce) of the standards or if the varietal name (column 1) would always have to be marked. Some delegations said that in many cases the varietal name was a code of numbers and letters and they preferred the trademark to be marked which would be more relevant information for the consumer/inspector. They stated the additional problem that for some produce the varietal name was not known but only the trademark (e.g. Pluot, Apriot, Plumcot). The Working Party decided that the question of marking should be discussed in the Specialized Section.

²¹ TRADE/WP.7/2001/9, paras. 40-52

48th Session of the Working Party²²

58. The 48th Session of the Specialized Section discussed this issue and decided that:

- The secretariat would prepare a proposal for the Working Party, proposing to amend the standard layout to include provisions regarding lists of varieties and the mentioning of trade marks.
- The secretariat would prepare a proposal for the Working Party, to amend all standards with lists of varieties which might contain trade marks to include the solution adopted by the Working Party in the appropriate form.

59. Marking requirements and trade marks, names of mutants and synonyms would be proposed for discussion at the next OECD Heads of Control Services Meeting.

REVIEW OF THE OECD GUIDE ON IMPLEMENTATION OF QUALITY CONTROL**47th Session of the Specialized Section²³**

60. The OECD Guide on Implementation of Quality Control was adopted in 1990. As many delegations were not familiar with this document, the 56th Session of the Working Party decided to request the Specialized Section on Coordination for the Standardization of Fresh Fruits and Vegetables to review the document and make recommendations to the Working Party as to its use.²⁴

61. The Specialized Section was informed that the document was applied by member countries of the OECD Scheme and worked well. The delegate of the European Community informed that the document was being reviewed by the Commission. The delegate of the Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Programme informed that the Codex Committee on Fresh Fruits and Vegetables agreed to consider Proposed Draft Codex Guidelines for the Quality Control of Fresh Fruits and Vegetables at its next session.

62. It was decided that the Secretariat would make the document available on the Internet. Delegations were invited to send proposals for the next session.

48th Session of the Specialized Section²⁵

63. Following a decision at the last session of the Specialized Section, the UN/ECE Secretariat made the document available on the Internet.

INTERNAL QUALITY

64. The 60th Session of the OECD Scheme for the Application of International Standards for Fresh Fruits and Vegetables discussed the timeliness of determining minimal and/or optimal levels of maturity in fruit and incorporating them into the standards and/or explanatory brochures. Many delegations were in favour of including minimal levels in the wording of the standards, and also supported that the wording of the standard should break produce down according to gustative quality, into the existing quality classes (Extra, I and II).

65. Delegations agreed that the discussions on minimal levels for each of the objective maturity criteria should be held commodity by commodity when drawing up and revising standards, i.e. solely within the UN/ECE. Discussions on ways of determining fruit maturity and on sampling methods should be confined to the OECD.

66. It was decided that sampling methods would be incorporated in the Operational Framework for the Control of the Quality of Produce Exported under the "Scheme", which would therefore be revised. The European Commission would be proposing a draft revision of the annex at the next session. The discussion on how to define internal quality would continue on the EDG site, and the Secretariat would then endeavour to draw up a summary for discussion at the next Plenary Meeting.²⁶

²² Report of the 48th Session of the Specialized Section on Standardization of Fresh Fruits and Vegetables, paras. 116-121

²³ TRADE/WP.7/GE.1/2001/19, paras. 141-147

²⁴ TRADE/WP.7/2000/11, paras. 81-83 & 106

²⁵ Report of the 48th Session of the Specialized Section on Standardization of Fresh Fruits and Vegetables, paras. 141-142

²⁶ AGR/CA/FVS/M(2001)2 Draft Summary Record of the 60th Plenary Meeting of National Representatives of the OECD Scheme, Paris, France, 23-25 October 2001

67. The 57th Session of the Working Party agreed that the Specialized Section on Standardization of Fresh Fruit and Vegetables would discuss internal quality when working on standards.²⁷

CHANGE OF THE NAME OF THE SPECIALIZED SECTION²⁸

68. The 57th Session of the Working Party agreed to change the name of the Specialized Section to "Specialized Section on Standardization of Fresh Fruits and Vegetables"

²⁷ TRADE/WP.7/2001/9, paras. 97-98

²⁸ TRADE/WP.7/2001/9, para. 39

B. ORGANIZATION FOR THE ECONOMIC COOPERATION AND DEVELOPMENT (OECD)²⁴

69. Main issues of concern to the Codex Committee on Fresh Fruits and Vegetables that were discussed at the 60th Session of the OECD Scheme for the Application of International Standards for Fresh Fruits and Vegetables (Paris, France, 23-25 October 2001) are summarized below. This session was the first held by the Scheme subsequent to the last session of the CCFFV.

DRAFT EXPLANATORY BROCHURES

70. The Meeting decided to publish explanatory brochures on the Standard for Plums and Tomatoes. It also decided to revise and publish the explanatory brochure on "Lettuces, Curled-leaved Endives and Broad-leaved (Batavian) Endives". The Meeting further decided to start brochures on Cultivated Mushrooms, Early and Ware Potatoes, Hazelnuts, Kiwifruit and pistachio nuts. Work was also underway on Apples and Pears, Citrus Fruits, Cucumbers, Beans, Table Grapes and Strawberries.

EXCHANGE OF INFORMATION BETWEEN NATIONAL INSPECTION SERVICES

71. The Plenary Meeting felt there was a need to make amendments to the content of the "Document to facilitate the exchange of information between national inspection services of exporting and importing countries on non-conformity of fruit and vegetables".

72. The Representative of the Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Programme drew the attention of the Plenary Meeting to the work of the Codex Committee on Food Import and Export Inspection and Certification Systems (CCFICS) and more specifically to the Codex Guidelines for the Exchange of Information between Countries on Rejections of Imported Food. The Guidelines include an annex on the standard format for the exchange of information, specifying the type of information countries need to provide.

73. The Meeting decided that a document incorporating all the amendments proposed at the current session would be posted on the EDG for discussion. The Secretariat would summarise the electronic discussion with a view to adopting a revised version of the document at the next session of the Plenary Meeting.

OECD RECOMMENDATION ON JOINT ORGANISATION OF THE VARIOUS TYPES OF INSPECTIONS RELATING TO FRESH FRUIT AND VEGETABLES

74. The 59th session of the Plenary Meeting decided to include in the Scheme's programme of work activities on "the interface between quality assurance and quality control and other food inspection systems", since the delegations agreed that all the inspections carried out on fruit and vegetables should be consolidated in order to facilitate trade. The 10th Meeting of Heads of National Inspection Services submitted to the Plenary Meeting a proposal to undertake work on a draft OECD Recommendation on joint organisation of the various types of inspections relating to fresh fruit and vegetables. Its purpose would be to introduce simplified procedures for border controls, in order to reduce the amount of time that perishable goods such as fruit and vegetables spend at borders between countries, and to provide private operators involved in international trade with simpler contacts or even one-stop shops for their dealings with the inspection services.

75. The delegates thought that further reflection was required on this issue before any decision was taken. Although the work was in line with the broader work of the OECD to facilitate trade and regulatory reform, the problems involved needed to be clarified. To that end, an initial debate could be held at the next session of the Meeting of Heads of National Inspection Services to discuss a Secretariat document covering the main problems encountered by individual countries but not specifying where the problems arose. Subsequently, a document indicating the possible scope, value-added and form of any further work, and taking stock of work already done on similar subjects, particularly in other international organisations, could be discussed at the next session of the Plenary Meeting.

IMPLEMENTATION OF RISK ANALYSIS IN OFFICIAL QUALITY INSPECTION SERVICES OF FRUIT AND VEGETABLES

76. The Meeting decided to conduct such work as part of the revision of Annex II of Council Decision C(99)10/FINAL (Operational Framework for the Control of the Quality of Produce Exported under the Scheme) and give some thought to changing the title to "Priority-setting criteria for inspection".

REVISION OF ANNEX II OF COUNCIL DECISION C(99)10/FINAL (OPERATIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE CONTROL OF THE QUALITY OF PRODUCE EXPORTED UNDER THE SCHEME)

77. The Meeting decided to proceed with the revision of this Annex, and to include:

- Sampling methods for the quality inspection of nuts;
- Sampling methods for the internal quality inspection of fruit;
- Risk analysis (priority-setting criteria for inspection).

APPROPRIATENESS OF THE SCHEME'S ACTIVITIES TO THE PRIORITY THEMES AND "CORE" ACTIVITIES OF THE OECD

78. The Plenary Meeting confirmed that its activities furthered the following priority objectives of the OECD:

- Trade and international investment;
- Best use of new technologies;
- Contributing to the development of non-member economies;
- Outreach to non-OECD members.

79. The Plenary Meeting decided that, of all the OECD's "core" activities, the Scheme should in future focus on peer reviews and benchmarking. For the next Plenary Meeting, the Secretariat would draft a document indicating how other OECD Committees proceeded with peer reviews and benchmarking.

PROMOTION OF THE ESTABLISHMENT OF ONE SINGLE INTERNATIONAL GRADE STANDARD SETTING BODY: PROGRESS SINCE THE 59TH SESSION OF THE PLENARY MEETING²⁹

80. An informal meeting of the Codex, OECD and UN/ECE Secretariats had been held in Paris on 20 April 2001 and had outlined suggestions to minimize duplication of work between the three organizations. The Plenary Meeting found the conclusions of the Informal Meeting constructive. The fact that the 24th session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission had failed to reach a consensus on the approval of proposals on circulating UN/ECE Standards at Step 3 of the Codex Procedure when the Codex Committee on Fresh Fruits and Vegetables began the elaboration of a standard for which a UN/ECE already existed and the introduction of trial periods for recommendations in the work of the CCFFV highlighted the need for further dialogue between the organisations involved in the standardisation of fruit and vegetables, more specifically within the institutions directly concerned and through informal meetings between the Secretariats and Chairs of those institutions.

81. The Representative of the FAO/WHO said that, with regard to the comparison of Codex and UNECE/OECD standards, the work could be conducted as part of the normal work procedure by the Codex Secretariat.

82. The Representative of the European Commission said that, in the European Community's view, the practical implementation of circulation of UN/ECE standards at Step 3 would greatly enhance co-operation between the international organisations involved in the standardisation of fruit and vegetables.

83. Proposals on harmonization of the Scope of the standards (i.e. the UN/ECE and OECD standards could enlarge their scope of application to all levels of distribution) and the adoption of Codex standards as OECD standards by the OECD Scheme as a basis for possible explanatory material, could be discussed during the forthcoming revision of Council Decision C(99)10/FINAL and the wording of the first primary objective thereof (article I.2), since the current wording, which was "to promote the establishment of one single international grade standard setting body", did not adequately reflect the concerns of the Scheme. The purpose of the Scheme was in fact to enhance co-operation between international organisations involved in the standardisation of fruit and vegetables.

²⁹ See also CX/FFV 02/2 paras. 3-7