

C O D E X A L I M E N T A R I U S C O M M I S S I O N



**Food and Agriculture
Organization of
the United Nations**



**World Health
Organization**

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Agenda Item 2(b)

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**JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME
CODEX COMMITTEE ON FRESH FRUITS AND VEGETABLES**

**18th Session
Phuket, Thailand, 24 – 28 February 2014**

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

This document is divided into two parts: Part I refers to the UNECE 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 Fruits and Vegetables.

PART I: UNITED NATIONS ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE (UNECE)

Activities of the UNECE Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards since the last session of the Codex Committee on Fresh Fruits and Vegetables

Work on standards

1. At its 68th session, held from 5 to 7 November 2012, the UNECE Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards:
 - adopted the revised texts of the standards for leafy vegetables (FFV-58), mangoes (FFV-45), watermelons (FFV-37), cultivated mushrooms (FFV-24), citrus fruit (FFV-14), melons (FFV-23), leeks (FFV-21), lettuces (FFV-22), tomatoes (FFV-36), headed cabbages (FFV-09) and pineapples (FFV-49);
 - adopted the text of the new standard for lambs lettuce as a recommendation for a one-year trial period.
2. At its 69th session, held from 4 to 5 November 2013, the UNECE Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards:
 - adopted the revised texts of the standards for apples (FFV-50), pears (FFV-51), Chinese cabbage (FFV-44), fennel (FFV-16), shallots (FFV-56), plums (FFV-29), apricots (FFV-02) and chilli peppers (FFV-61);
 - adopted the texts of the new standards for quince and persimmons as recommendations for a one-year trial period;
 - extended for a further year the trial period for the standard for lambs lettuce.
3. The texts of the standards, as well as documents with the revisions introduced by the delegations are available at: www.unece.org/trade/agr/welcome.htm

Explanatory brochures

4. At its November 2012 session, the Working Party approved the explanatory brochures for the standards on pineapples and fresh chilli peppers. Copies of these brochures in English, French and Russian can be obtained from the UNECE secretariat free of charge.
5. The Working Party decided to start work on a UNECE explanatory brochure for persimmons. The first draft of the brochure will be discussed at the next session of the Specialized Section on Standardization of Fresh Fruit and Vegetables to be held in Geneva from 28 April to 1 May 2014.

Promotion of standards and capacity-building

6. UNECE promoted its standards at the:
 - FRUIT LOGISTICA fresh produce trade show in Berlin in February 2013;
 - International Symposium on Managing Quality in Chains, organized by the International Society for Horticultural Sciences in the United Kingdom in September 2013;
 - Workshop on Agricultural Quality Standards for East African Countries in Nairobi in September 2013.

Other activities and decisions

7. At its November 2012 session, the Working Party established periodicity in revising the standards by including the following provision in its working procedures:

"The standards should not be revised earlier than three years after the latest revision unless there is an urgent and well-substantiated need to do so. Between the revisions, proposals that were submitted to the secretariat by countries would be considered by the specialized sections as work in progress."

8. At the November 2012 session, the delegations of Germany, Sweden, the United Kingdom and the United States asked the support of the UNECE Secretariat to explore how the existing mechanisms of cooperation with other international organizations working on quality standards, such as OECD and Codex, could be strengthened. The aim was to optimize the use of resources and reduce duplication of activities to better serve the sectors involved. The delegations asked the secretariat to transmit this common position of the Working Party to the secretariats of the other two organizations for consideration by these organizations' members. In her letter of 15 November 2013, the Director of the UNECE Trade and Sustainable Land Management Division transmitted the Working Party position to the Codex and OECD secretariats.

9. The Working Party took note of the opinion of the UNOG Senior Legal Adviser on the legal status of the Geneva Protocol and on the legal standing of UNECE standards (see documents ECE/TRADE/C/WP.7/2012/3 and ECE/TRADE/C/WP.7/2012/2, paras. 32-35, at <http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=29214>). As some countries asked for more time to evaluate the information provided by the Legal Adviser, the Working Party decided to reconsider the text of the draft Geneva Agreement, which was meant to replace the Geneva Protocol, at its 2013 session.

10. In November 2013, the Working Party considered a revised draft of the Geneva Agreement renamed as draft Geneva Understanding. The purpose of the revisions was to clarify that the text of the Understanding should not be interpreted as being obligatory and that countries would decide themselves on the level of their commitment in implementing UNECE standards. The revised text is available at <http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=31899>. Upon the request of the delegation of the United States, the Working Party decided to suspend the decision regarding the adoption of this document for one more year.
11. The 70th session of the Working Party will be held from 3 to 5 November 2014.
12. It is noted that the 17th Session of the Codex Committee on Fresh Fruits and Vegetables (September 2014) was informed that the UNECE was about to finalize the revision of their standards for mangoes, pineapples, tomatoes and fresh chilli peppers and that the Committee might wish to consider reviewing the corresponding Codex standards to determine if a revision was appropriate.
13. As the final decision on the revision of the UNECE standards would be taken by the UNECE Working Party meeting later in 2012, the Representative from UNECE offered to prepare a note after the session of the Working Party in November 2012, highlighting to which extent the revised UNECE standards differed from Codex standards and on that basis Codex members could take a decision on the need to revise the relevant Codex standards (REP13/FFV, paras. 125-126)
14. An information note prepared by the UNECE Secretariat highlighting the differences between Codex and UNECE for chilli peppers, mangoes, pineapples and tomatoes is presented in the Annex to this document. The Committee is invited to consider this information and decide on the best way to proceed with the review of the relevant Codex standards in order to determine the need for their revision.

ANNEX

REVISION OF THE UNECE STANDARDS RELEVANT TO THE WORK OF THE CCFV

Prepared by the UNECE secretariat

This note summarizes the main changes introduced to the UNECE standards for mangoes, tomatoes, pineapples and chilli peppers by the UNECE Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards since the 17th session of the Codex Committee on Fresh Fruits and Vegetables held in September 2012. By highlighting the differences between the UNECE and Codex standards, the note is meant to help the CCFV countries decide on the need to revise the Codex standards.

The texts of the UNECE standards are available at: <http://www.unece.org/trade/agr/standard/fresh/ffv-standardse.html>

The texts documenting the changes introduced to the standards are available at: <http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=29093> and <http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=31896>, as post-session documents.

Standard for mangoes

1. In the "Minimum requirements" section, the UNECE standard has two provisions related to pest and pest damage: "practically free from pests" and "free from damage caused by pests affecting the flesh". The corresponding provision in the Codex standard is: "practically free of damage caused by pests".
2. There is a separate section on maturity requirements in the UNECE standard.
3. In the "Classification" section, the UNECE standard allows for "a slight defect in shape". In general, UNECE standards allow for one slight defect in shape for Class I products. Codex standards allow for several "slight defects in shape".
4. In the UNECE standard, "slight bruising" and "bruising" are allowed for Classes I and II, respectively. In the Codex standard, "healed bruises" for both quality classes are grouped together with skin defects.
5. A new size group "D" was added in the UNECE standard. The provisions for skin defects now read:

For Class I:

"Slight skin defects due to rubbing or sunburn and suberized stains due to resin exudation (elongated trails included) not exceeding 3, 4, 5, 6 cm² for size groups A, B, C, D respectively"

For Class II:

"Skin defects due to rubbing or sunburn and suberized stains due to resin exudation (elongated trails included) not exceeding 5, 6, 7, 8 cm² for size groups A, B, C, D respectively"

6. The minimum weight was lowered from 150 to 100 g. Corresponding corrections to the table on size uniformity were introduced. Provisions concerning sizing in the UNECE Standard read as follows:

"Size is determined by the weight of the fruit or by count.

The minimum weight of mangoes shall be 100 g.

To ensure uniformity in size, the following provisions must be respected:

Size code	Weight in grams	Maximum permissible difference between fruit within the package in grams
A	100 - 350	75
B	351 - 550	100
C	551 - 800	125
D	> 800	150

For mangoes sized by count, the difference in size in the package should be consistent with the above table."

7. In the Codex standard, the minimum size is 200 g. The size is defined by weight only.
8. The quality and size tolerances are formulated differently in the UNECE and Codex standards.
9. The "Commercial specification" section in the UNECE standard differs from the "Commercial identification" section in the Codex standard.

Standard for tomatoes

10. In the "Minimum requirements" section, the UNECE standard has two provisions related to pests and pest damage: "practically free from pests" and "free from damage caused by pests affecting the flesh". The corresponding provision in the Codex standard is: "practically free of pests and damage caused by them affecting the general appearance of the produce".

11. The section on sizing provisions in the UNECE standard is structured differently from the corresponding section in the Codex standard.

12. The Codex standard does not make any reference to cherry and cocktail tomatoes. The UNECE standard covers this category of tomatoes in the following provision:

"The following provisions shall not apply to trusses of tomatoes and are optional for cherry and cocktail tomatoes below 40 mm in diameter and for Class II."

The Working Party clarified that the provisions for sizing covered cherry and cocktail tomatoes of different shapes.

13. The quality and size tolerances are formulated differently in the UNECE and Codex standards.

14. The "Uniformity" section (as well as the "Nature of produce" and the "Origin of produce" sections) of the UNECE standard allows for a mixture of tomatoes:

"However, a mixture of tomatoes of distinctly different varieties, commercial types and/or colours may be packed together in a package, provided they are uniform in quality and, for each variety, commercial type and/or colour concerned, in origin."

The Codex standard has no provisions on mixtures of tomatoes.

15. None of the UNECE standards for fresh fruit and vegetables has a section on presentation.

Standard for pineapples

16. In the UNECE standard, pineapples for ornamental use are excluded. The Codex standard does not make reference to this type of pineapple.

17. Both standards allow for pineapples, with or without crown. However, the UNECE standard is more specific: "if present, the crown may be reduced or trimmed".

18. The minimum requirements for the stalk differ in the two standards. The UNECE standard stipulates:

"When a stalk is present, it shall not be longer than 2.5 cm measured from the shoulder of the fruit and the cut must be transversal, straight and clean. However, during transportation pineapples with a longer stem are excluded from these requirements."

In the Codex standard, the length of the stalk, called "peduncle", is limited to 2 cm. The standard does not allow for longer stems during transportation.

19. The "Maturity requirements" section of the UNECE standard brings together all the characteristics related to maturity under one heading. In the Codex standard, some of these characteristics appear under "Minimum requirements". Also, the UNECE standard allows explicitly for green pineapples, "provided the minimum maturity requirements are met".

20. The UNECE standard says the length of the crown "should not exceed 150 per cent of the length of the fruit" in Classes I and II. The Codex standard prescribes – for the same Classes – that the length of the crown "Be between 50 and 150 per cent of the length of the fruit".

21. The UNECE standard is more specific with regard to the crown of Class I fruit, which may be:

- Slightly damaged;
- Slightly discoloured;
- Slightly curved with a maximum inclination not exceeding 30° from the longitudinal axis of the fruit.

22. In Class I, the UNECE standard allows for one "slight defect in shape" (as compared to several "slight defects in shape" in the Codex standard); "slight skin defects not exceeding 5 per cent of the total surface area (4 per cent in the Codex standard); "slight bruises" (not mentioned in the Codex standard at all).

23. In Class II, the UNECE standard indicates that "The flesh must be free from major defects", while the Codex standard makes this requirement more restrictive: "The defects must not, in any case, affect the pulp of the fruit." The skin defects are not allowed to exceed 10 per cent in the UNECE standard, and 8 per cent in the Codex standard. Bruises are allowed in the UNECE standard, while they are not mentioned in the Codex standard.

24. The sizing provisions are simpler in the UNECE standard:

“Size is determined by weight.

To ensure uniformity in size, the range in size between produce in the same package shall not exceed:

- 300 grams for fruit weighing 1 300 g or less;
- 680 grams for fruit weighing more than 1 300 g.”

As compared to the Codex standard, there is no indication of the minimum weight. There is no size code table either.

25. The quality and size tolerances are formulated differently in the UNECE and Codex standards. The size tolerance of 20 per cent in the UNECE standard is more generous than 10 per cent in the Codex standard.

26. The uniformity provisions in the UNECE standard require “uniformity in colouring and length of crowns” for the “Extra” Class and Class I fruit. The Codex standard says “For “Extra” Class, colour and ripeness should be uniform.”

27. The “Nature of produce” section is more specific in the UNECE standard:

- “Pineapples” if the contents are not visible from the outside;
- Name of variety for “Extra” Class and Class I. The name of the variety can be replaced by a synonym. A trade name¹ can only be given in addition to the variety or the synonym;
- “Without crown” or equivalent denomination, where appropriate.

28. The “Commercial specifications” section in the UNECE standard is:

- Class
- Size expressed as:
 - Minimum and maximum weight; or
 - Number of fruits.
- Colour code (optional);
- The indication “Should not be stored below 8^o C” (optional).

It differs from the “Commercial Identification” section in the Codex standard.

Standard for chilli peppers

29. The UNECE standard applies to varieties grown from five subspecies:

“This standard applies to chilli peppers of varieties (cultivars) grown from *Capsicum annum*, *C. baccatum*, *C. chinense*, *C. frutescens* and *C. pubescens*, to be supplied fresh to the consumer, chilli peppers for industrial processing being excluded.”

The Codex standard “applies to commercial varieties of chilli peppers grown from *Capsicum spp*, of the *Solanaceae* family, ...”.

30. In the “Minimum requirements” section, the UNECE standard allows “the stalk and calyx” to be missing. The Codex standard says “the stalk (stem) may be missing”.

31. The UNECE standard has two provisions related to pests and pest damage: “practically free from pests” and “practically free from damage caused by pests”. The corresponding provision in the Codex standard is: “practically free of pests and damage caused by them affecting the general appearance of the produce”.

32. The minimum requirements provision “fresh in appearance, including stalk and calyx” is missing in the Codex standard.

33. In the “Classification” section, the UNECE standard does not specify the percentages (as in the Codex standard: 0.5% for “Extra” Class, 2% for Class I and 3% for Class II) of the product surface affected by defects. On the contrary, the UNECE standard is more specific with regard to the type of defects for Class I:

- A slight defect in shape;
- Slight defects in colouring; colour change due to ripening is not considered a defect;
- Slight skin defects;
- A slightly damaged stalk, if present.

¹ A trade name can be a trade mark for which protection has been sought or obtained or any other commercial denomination.

And for Class II:

- Defects in shape;
- Defects in colouring; colour change due to ripening is not considered a defect;
- Skin defects;
- Damaged stalk and calyx, if present;
- Slight lack of freshness of the stalk and calyx.

34. The UNECE standard allows chilli peppers to be sized by length or by maximum diameter. The Codex standard allows sizing by length only. In the UNECE standard, the sizing provisions for Class II chilli peppers are optional.

35. The quality and size tolerances are formulated differently in the UNECE and Codex standards.

36. The “Uniformity” section (as well as the “Nature of produce” and the “Origin of produce” sections) of the UNECE standard allows a mixture of chilli peppers:

However, a mixture of chilli peppers of distinctly different colours and/or commercial types may be packed together in a sales package, provided they are uniform in quality and, for each colour and/or commercial type concerned, in origin.

The Codex standard has no provisions on mixtures of chilli peppers.

37. Provisions in the sections “Nature of produce”, “Origin of produce” and “Commercial specifications” differ from each in the UNECE and Codex standards.

PART II: ORGANIZATION FOR ECONOMIC COOPERATION AND DEVELOPMENT (OECD)

Activities of the OECD Fruit and Vegetables Scheme since the 17th Session of the Codex Committee on Fresh Fruit and Vegetables

The OECD Fruit and Vegetables Scheme would like to maintain and further extend the collaboration and cooperation with the Codex Committee for Fresh Fruit and Vegetables. In this context, the following actions and activities were implemented since the last session of the CCFV:

- The 72nd Plenary Meeting of the Fruit and Vegetables Scheme held in December 2013 agreed to apply the *Codex Standard for Pomegranate* [CODEX STAN 310-2013] under the Scheme. This is the second Codex Standard approved by the Scheme as a benchmark standard.
- The Scheme developed the *OECD Explanatory Brochure on Pomegranate* in 2013. This is the first OECD brochure based on a Codex Standard. Codex members were involved in the development of the brochure and provided valuable inputs. The brochure will be published in early 2014 in hard copies and electronic version.
- The OECD and the Codex Secretariat will organize a Special Event on Pomegranate during the 18th Session of the CCFV in February 2014. This event will also be a good opportunity to discuss possible future collaboration identifying potential work areas where the two organizations could further cooperate.

All information on the Scheme, as well as inspection rules, guidelines and explanatory materials are available on the website of the Scheme: www.oecd.org/tad/fv

Introduction

1. The OECD Scheme for the Application of International Standards for Fruit and Vegetables was established in 1962. The Scheme's objective is to facilitate international trade in fruit and vegetables through the harmonized application and interpretation of international marketing standards. It shows best practices in the area of fruit and vegetables quality inspection. The Scheme is well known for its inspection procedures and for its explanatory brochures that are recognized in many countries. The Scheme also organizes peer reviews and training courses, workshops and capacity building activities.

2. The Scheme is open to OECD, UN or WTO Member Countries, which are willing to fulfil the rules of the Scheme. Currently, 25 countries participate in the Scheme. The Secretariat of the FAO/WHO Food Standards Programme (Codex Alimentarius Commission) is a regular participant in the annual OECD Plenary Meeting of the Fruit and Vegetables Scheme and the OECD Secretariat regularly participates in Codex and FAO meetings.

Activities

Standards

3. The OECD standards are adopted from other international standardization bodies such as the Codex Alimentarius Commission or the UNECE. Currently the OECD applies the Codex Standard for Pomegranate and Bananas.

Table 2

In 2013, the Members agreed to apply the *Codex Standard for Pomegranate* [CODEX STAN 310-2013] as a benchmark international standard under the Scheme.

Inspection rules and certificate

4. The OECD Fruit and Vegetables Scheme establishes inspection rules for the implementation of conformity checks on fresh fruit and vegetables. The primary purpose of the inspection rules is to ensure that the quality and classification of the exported product are in conformity with the benchmark international standard applied by the OECD. These rules are unique at international level and serve as a basis of many national fruit and vegetables inspection systems for export as well as at other stages of marketing.

Table 3

The Scheme made a good progress and finalized the work on the revision of the *OECD Operating Rules for the Conformity Check of the Produce Exported under the Scheme*. The approval in process and the Rules of the Scheme will be updated with the revised inspection methods in 2014.

Peer reviews

5. Peer Reviews is one of the benchmark activities of the OECD. Since 2007, the Scheme also undertakes voluntary peer reviews on fruit and vegetables quality inspection systems in Member countries. The Peer Review is a systematic examination and assessment of performance of national fruit and vegetables quality inspection systems by experts from other countries under the umbrella of the OECD. The ultimate goal of the peer review is to help improve policy-making, adopt best practices and comply with established international standards and principles. The peer reviews furthermore provides confidence in the infrastructure and systems relating to inspection systems on fresh fruits and vegetables.

Table 4

The Scheme undertook a Peer Review on the national fruit and vegetables quality inspection system in Spain in 2013. The Draft Peer Review Report is available on the Scheme's website.

Meeting of Heads of National Inspection Services

6. The OECD Meeting of Heads of National Inspection Services facilitates discussions between inspection services on major issues, developments and challenges in the fruit and vegetables sector and quality inspection system. It provides an update on the latest developments in inspection techniques and tools. It takes place within each biennial programme of work and budget.

Table 5

The next Meeting of the OECD Heads of National Inspection Services will be held on 20-23 May 2014 in Warsaw, Poland. The main issues that will be examined at the Meeting are: traceability (origin), application of tolerances and interpretation of skin defects. The Codex Secretariat will be informed as soon as the Draft Agenda is available.

Publications

Explanatory brochures

7. The OECD explanatory brochures comprise explanatory notes and illustrations to facilitate the common interpretation of standards. They are valuable tool for the inspection authorities, professional bodies and traders interested in the international trade of fruit and vegetables. The newest publications also include a USB key with the high quality electronic version of the brochures. Currently the OECD explanatory brochures are available for 26 products in hard copies as well as in electronic versions.

Table 6

Since the last session of the CCFFV, the Scheme published the *OECD explanatory Brochures on Watermelons and Broccoli* (e-brochure) in 2013, and *Pomegranate* in 2014.

The *OECD Brochure on Pomegranate* is the first OECD brochure to be developed on the basis of a Codex Standard and in collaboration with Codex Member Countries. The OECD Secretariat would like to thank all Codex Member countries that participated in this exercise between the two Organizations and provided valuable input to the brochure. The brochure will be presented in a framework of a Special Event organized by the OECD and the Codex Secretariats during the 18th Session of the CCFFV in February 2014 on the OECD activities, the development of the *Codex Standard for Pomegranate* and the OECD Explanatory Brochure on this product. This event will also discuss possible future collaboration e.g. on explanatory materials and other possible areas where the two organizations could cooperate (e.g. capacity building).

The Scheme is currently working on draft OECD Brochures on Garlic, Cherries, Chinese cabbages, Chicories, Plums and Tomatoes.

Guidelines

8. The OECD guidelines provide tools for the inspection services as well as to the private sector as regards the implementation of a quality inspection system, such as inspection methods for internal quality, notification of nonconformity, etc.

Table 7

The OECD Scheme is currently developing the *OECD Guidelines on Quality Inspection*, which is expected to be finalized in 2014. It will be an illustrated publication with explanatory notes on rules of inspection.

Capacity building activities

9. The Scheme organizes international training courses and workshops subject to available funds. These training courses are focused on the introduction of the OECD quality inspection procedures, the interpretation of international standards by the OECD explanatory tools, the introduction of inspection authorities and latest developments and challenges in the quality inspection. The Codex Secretariat is regularly invited to participate and to contribute to these workshops and other capacity building activities in developing countries.

Table 8

The OECD was involved in the organization of the following Training courses in 2012/13:

- **2012 and 2013 International Training Course, Mojmirovce, Slovakia;**
- **2013 Annual Workshop on Application of Commercial Quality Standards for Fruits and Vegetables in Eastern Africa, October 2013, Nairobi, Kenya.**

Distance Learning Tools

10. The Scheme is exploring the possibility to develop distance-learning tools on quality inspection. The aim of the project is to provide advice, assistance and sufficient training tools on standards, guidelines, methodologies for countries. The OECD and the FAO Secretariats are examining the possibility to develop jointly an e-learning tool on quality inspection based on the *OECD Guidelines on Quality Inspection*.

Economic and market analysis

11. The Scheme regularly provides economic and market analysis of selected fruit and vegetables products. This work gives an overview on trends, trade volume/value on international trade as well as analyses for production and consumption. The analysis is done by experts at the invitation of the OECD Secretariat.