

CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations



World Health
Organization

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Agenda Item 2b)

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

Twenty-third Session

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 Activities of the UNECE Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards since the last session of the Codex Committee on Fresh Fruits and Vegetables; and
- Part II refers to Activities of the Scheme for the Application of International Standards for Fruit and Vegetables since the last Session of the Codex Committee on Fresh Fruits and Vegetable.

ACTIVITIES OF THE UNECE WORKING PARTY ON AGRICULTURAL QUALITY STANDARDS SINCE THE LAST SESSION OF THE CODEX COMMITTEE ON FRESH FRUITS AND VEGETABLES

1. During the past three years, the work under the Working Party has focused on:
 - Revising existing standards and helping countries keep quality along the entire food supply chain;
 - Food loss and waste prevention and reduction: [UNECE Code of Good Practice: reducing food loss and ensuring optimum handling of fresh fruit and vegetables along the value chain](#) (publication ECE/TRADE/470 issued in English, French and Russian in January 2023);
 - Digitalization of agricultural trade processes;
 - Collaboration on food loss and waste prevention, circularity in agriculture, and related topics with FAO and other international and national stakeholders.

ADOPTION OF STANDARDS

2. The work on standardization of fresh fruit and vegetables and dry and dried produce resulted in:

77th session of the Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards (14-16 November 2022, [ECE/CTCS/WP.7/2022/2](#))

- Adoption of revised UNECE standards for asparagus, cherries, leafy vegetables, pomegranates.
- Development of a standard for certain small fruits, adopted as a recommendation for one-year trial.
- Adoption of new UNECE standards for dried persimmons, raw and roasted inshell peanuts, raw and roasted peanut kernels, as well as extension of recommendations for inshell pecans and pecan kernels.

78th session of the Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards (13-15 November 2023, [ECE/CTCS/WP.7/2023/2](#))

- Adoption of a new UNECE standard for certain small fruit, and revised standards for asparagus, broccoli, kiwifruit, onions, peas, sweet chestnuts, as well as revised minimum quality specifications for fresh fruit and vegetables.
- Development of a standard for sweet potatoes, adopted as a recommendation for one-year trial.
- Adoption of a revised standard layout of UNECE standards on fresh fruit and vegetables.
- Adoption of new UNECE standards for inshell pecans and pecan kernels, and a revised standard for cashew kernels.

79th session of the Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards (11-13 November 2024, [ECE/CTCS/WP.7/2024/2](#))

- Adoption of a new UNECE standard for sweet potatoes, and revised standards for courgettes, headed cabbages, leafy vegetables.
- Development of a revised informal reference list of citrus fruit varieties.
- Adoption of revised UNECE standards for almond kernels, blanched almond kernels, inshell almonds, dried tomatoes, dates.
- Development of a standard for whole dried rosehip, adopted as a recommendation for one-year trial.

3. For further information on the above and the texts of the UNECE standards, please refer to the following web pages: <https://unece.org/trade/working-party-agricultural-quality-standards-wp7> and <https://unece.org/trade/wp7/FFV-Standards>

EXPLANATORY MATERIAL

4. In 2024, the Working Party adopted explanatory posters for almond kernels and cashew kernels.

STUDIES

5. A joint UNECE/OECD study analysing the impact of agricultural quality standards on the trade of fruit and vegetables was undertaken and presented at the 77th session of the Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards in November 2022. The study, which was based on regression analysis at product level, found that adoption/revision of ECE standards and publication of OECD fruit and vegetable explanatory brochures are associated with substantial increases in international trade of fresh fruit and vegetables (ranging from 8-35 per cent depending on the product).

CAPACITY-BUILDING AND PROMOTION

6. Apart from its five regular annual meetings, the following capacity-building and promotional events were held during 2022-2024.
- Launch of an online course on agricultural quality standards and food loss reduction in fresh produce value chains, July 2022 (4 video-based modules, available at: <https://unece.org/trade/wp7/e-learning>)
 - Seminar on sustainable meat and livestock production, Geneva, Switzerland and online, 29 September 2022
 - Roundtable on food loss and waste prevention and reduction, Geneva, Switzerland and online, 15 November 2022
 - UN Issue-based Coalition on Sustainable Food Systems (IBC-SFS) and UN Food Systems Coordination Hub: regional food systems stocktaking meeting, Geneva, Switzerland, 28 March 2023
 - UNECE and IBC-SFS: Food systems talks: Towards a circular economy of food, online, 10 July 2023
 - UNECE/FAO seminar on sustainable meat and livestock, Geneva, Switzerland and online, 29 August 2023
 - Seed Potato rapporteur's meeting, Brest, France, 10-12 October 2023
 - Roundtable on sustainable food systems - digitalization and food loss and waste reduction, Geneva, Switzerland and online, 14 November 2023
 - IBC-SFS and UN Food Systems Coordination Hub: regional meeting of national food systems convenors, Geneva, Switzerland, 12 March 2024
 - IBC-SFS and UN Food Systems Coordination Hub: Regional Forum on Sustainable Development side-event on Food Systems Transformation as Accelerator for the SDGs Implementation in the Europe and Central Asia Region, Geneva, Switzerland, 13 March 2024
 - UNECE and IBC-SFS: Roundtable on SDG2 at the Regional Forum on Sustainable Development, Geneva, Switzerland, 14 March 2024
 - World Circular Economy Forum Accelerator Session "Circular Food Systems: Enabling Policies and Successful Business Cases in the Agri-Food Sector", Brussels, Belgium, 18 April 2024
 - Video on the UNECE seed potato standard, first International Day of Potato, 30 May 2024
 - Training workshop Agricultural Quality standards: methods and tools for inspection and sampling of fresh and dried fruit and vegetables (UNECE with UNDP, OECD and Hilfswerk International), Tashkent, Uzbekistan, 4-6 June 2024.
 - Roundtable on digitalization, high-level panel on capacity building needs and initiatives, and exhibition of agricultural produce, Geneva, Switzerland, 12 November 2024

UPCOMING REGULAR MEETINGS IN 2025 (GENEVA, SWITZERLAND)

- Specialized Section on Standardization of Seed Potatoes, 52nd session: 18-20 March 2025
- Specialized Section on Standardization of Fresh Fruit and Vegetables, 73rd session: 23-25 April 2025
- Specialized Section on Standardization of Dry and Dried Produce, 72nd session: 11-13 June 2025
- Specialized Section on Standardization of Meat, 33rd session: 26-28 August 2025
- Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards, 80th session: 17-19 November 2025

CONTACTS

7. For further information on UNECE's work on agricultural quality standards, please contact Marit Nilses, Secretary to the Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards, at the Agricultural Standards Unit, UNECE, Geneva, Switzerland (nilsesm@un.org and agrstandards@un.org)

ACTIVITIES OF THE SCHEME FOR THE APPLICATION OF INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS FOR FRUIT AND VEGETABLES SINCE THE LAST SESSION OF THE CODEX COMMITTEE ON FRESH FRUITS AND VEGETABLES

8. The OECD Fruit and Vegetables Scheme provides a complete and internationally harmonized export quality inspection system for member countries. The mutual recognition of inspections is strengthened through implementation of peer reviews on national quality inspection systems, organization of meetings for the heads of national inspection services and workshops for the inspectors. Frequent meetings also allow for a comprehensive dialogue amongst stakeholders in reviewing and elaborating the OECD standards' interpretation, as well as defining inspection procedures.
9. The Scheme is well known for its explanatory brochures on standards. Currently there are over 30 explanatory brochures, and new material is added each year.
10. The Scheme has approved three new Explanatory Brochures based on Codex standards:
 - Explanatory Brochure on Passion Fruit, Rapporteur -> Kenya [Codex Standard] – **approved, published in 2023**
 - Explanatory Brochure on Green Bananas, Rapporteur -> Spain [Codex Standard] – **approved, published in 2023**
 - Explanatory Brochure on Papaya, Rapporteur -> Brazil [Codex Standard] – **approved, to be published in 2025**
11. The Scheme has approved new Explanatory Brochures based on UNECE standards (“Small Fruits” and “Sweet Potatoes”) and is currently working on the following brochures:
 - Explanatory Brochure on Berries, Rapporteur -> Slovakia [UNECE Standard] – **approved**, to be published in 2025
 - Explanatory Brochure on Broccoli [UNECE Standard] - **approved**
 - Explanatory Brochure on Cauliflower, Rapporteur -> Hungary [UNECE Standard] - **approved**, pending a couple of photos
 - Explanatory Brochure on Courgette, Rapporteur -> Spain [UNECE Standard] – in progress
12. The Scheme has approved to start working on the following updates of brochures:
 - Explanatory Brochure on Citrus [UNECE Standard], to include a specific section on Lime
 - Explanatory Brochure on Carrot [UNECE Standard]
 - Explanatory Brochure on Asparagus [UNECE Standard]
13. The Scheme is ready to start working on new possible brochures based on Codex or UNECE standards as needed by its member countries.

PARTICIPATING COUNTRIES

14. The OECD Fruit and Vegetables Scheme is open to any OECD or non-OECD country that is a member of the United Nations, or of the World Trade Organisation. There is also close co-operation with the UN family especially the FAO, WHO, UNECE, and UNESCAP as well as non-governmental and farmer organisations.
15. There are currently **28** participating countries in the OECD Fruits and Vegetable Scheme: **Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Bulgaria, Croatia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Kenya, Luxembourg, Morocco, Netherlands, New Zealand, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and Türkiye.**
16. The OECD Secretariat invited Kazakhstan as an observer.

OECD FRUIT AND VEGETABLES SCHEME MEETINGS

17. In 2024, the following meetings of the OECD Fruit and Vegetables Scheme took place:
 - 83rd Plenary meeting: 12-13 December 2024 (OECD Conference Centre, Paris, France).
 - Produce Working Group: 11 December 2024 (OECD Conference Centre, Paris, France).
18. In 2025, the following meetings of the OECD Fruit and Vegetables Scheme are currently planned:
 - The 84th Plenary Meeting of the OECD Fruit and Vegetables Scheme is schedule to take place on 8-10 December 2025 in the OECD Conference Center in Paris, France.

- The 35th International Meeting on Quality Control of Fruit and Vegetables (IAT-2025) will be held face-to-face in Bonn in Germany on 25-27 March 2025, and the OECD Fruits and Vegetable Scheme will have a dedicated meeting in the margins on 27th March afternoon.
- The 24th International Training Course on Harmonization of the Fruit and Vegetables Quality Assessment will be held in Slovak Republic in the second half of June 2025 (exact dates tbc). The OECD Fruits and Vegetable Scheme will organize a half day meeting in the margins of this training course.
- The 19th OECD Meeting of the Heads of National Inspection Services as well as a Harmonisation meeting and possible other side events will be held in Morocco in November 2025 (exact dates tbc).

MISSIONS AND OTHER MEETINGS

19. Last year, the OECD Fruits and Vegetable Scheme participated in the following events:

- Joint UNECE-OECD-UNDP-Hiflswerk International Training workshop on Agricultural Quality standards: methods and tools for inspection and sampling of fresh and dried fruit and vegetables. 4-6 June 2024, Tashkent, Uzbekistan.
- Dutch Kwaliteits-Controle-Bureau (KCB) Harmonisation meeting 2024, 4-6 June 2024, Zoetermeer, The Netherlands. The OECD sent one Secretariat staff and external experts who made presentations and led their training sessions.
- 23rd ITC Harmonization Meeting of the Fruit and Vegetables Quality Assessment, Mojmírovce, Slovak Republic, 17-19 September 2024, physical meeting. The OECD sent one staff and two external experts who made presentations and led their training sessions.
- 79th session of the Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards (WP.7), hybrid, hosted from Geneva, Switzerland, 11-13 November 2024. The OECD sent one Secretariat staff.

20. The OECD Fruits and Vegetable Scheme also jointly organized the following three remote webinars with COLEAD:

- Sixth Joint COLEAD-OECD Fruit and Vegetables Scheme webinar on Fruit and Vegetables industry: Food Fraud Prevention, Monitoring, and Controls, remote (ZOOM connection), 19 March 2024.
- Seventh Joint COLEAD-OECD Fruit and Vegetables Scheme webinar on Fruit and Vegetables industry: Factors affecting consumer choices for fresh fruit and vegetables, remote (ZOOM connection), 20 June 2024.
- Eighth Joint COLEAD-OECD Fruit and Vegetables Scheme webinar on Fruit and Vegetables industry: Market challenges and geopolitical issues affecting trade flows in Fruits and Vegetables (ZOOM connection), 29 October 2024.

21. The webinars were attended by over 500 persons. The Secretariat worked jointly with COLEAD to decide agenda topics as well as to identify and invite speakers.

PEER REVIEWS

22. The Scheme regularly undertakes Peer Reviews on national fruit and vegetables quality inspection systems on a voluntary basis, to examine and assess its performance by experts from other countries under the umbrella of the OECD. The ultimate goal is to help improve policy making, adopt best practices and comply with established international standards and principles. The OECD Scheme undertook a Peer Review on the German fruit and vegetables quality inspection system and is currently working on the final report.

23. A new Peer Review on the Italian inspection system is expected to be conducted in 2025.

GUIDELINES

24. The scheme also develops and updates guidelines for fruit and vegetables inspectors. This helps harmonise interpretation and enhance trade amongst member countries. The following guideline and recommendations are available from the official website of the OECD Fruit and Vegetables Scheme free of charges:

- Quality Inspection
- Recommendation of the OECD FVS Scheme on the verification of the country of origin
- Objective tests to determine quality of Fruit and Vegetables
- Notification of Non-conformity

- Risk Analysis
- Inspector's trainings
- Guidelines for the implementation of quality controls in the event of pandemics and other disruptive events

MEETINGS OF HEADS OF NATIONAL INSPECTION SERVICES

25. The Scheme also holds Meetings of Heads of National Inspection Services (HNIS) of its Members Countries every two years. The objective of these meetings is triple: to facilitate discussions between inspection services on major problems, developments and challenges in the fruit and vegetables sector and quality inspection system; to share and harmonise the application of the OECD Scheme; and to present developments in the fruit and vegetables sector and quality inspection system in the Host Country. The proceedings are available upon request. The next Meeting will be hosted by Morocco in November 2025 (exact dates tbc).

CONTACTS

26. For further information on OECD's work, please contact Jose Brambila, Programme Manager, or Aurelia Nicault, Programme Officer, Trade and Agriculture Directorate, OECD Codes and Schemes, 2 rue André Pascal - 75016 Paris, France (Jose.Brambila@oecd.org; aurelia.nicault@oecd.org)