



# Economic and Social Council

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## Economic Commission for Europe

Steering Committee on Trade Capacity and Standards

### Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards

#### Seventy-ninth session

Geneva, 11–13(a.m.) November 2024

Item 1 of the provisional agenda

#### Adoption of the agenda

### Annotated provisional agenda\*

#### I. Provisional agenda

1. Adoption of the agenda.
2. Matters arising since the last session:
  - (a) Recent developments in the United Nations, the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe and its subsidiary bodies;
  - (b) Recent developments in other organizations.
3. Working Procedures of the Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards.
4. Specialized Section on Standardization of Fresh Fruit and Vegetables.
5. Specialized Section on Standardization of Dry and Dried Produce.
6. Specialized Section on Standardization of Seed Potatoes.
7. Specialized Section on Standardization of Meat.
8. Capacity-building and promotional activities.
9. Sustainable food systems and resource efficiency:
  - (a) Digitalization;
  - (b) Food loss and waste.
10. Harmonized System codes for fresh and dried fruit.
11. Use and impact of the agricultural quality standards.
12. Future work.
13. Programme of work of the Working Party for 2025.

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\* Documents for the meeting will be made available at <https://unece.org/info/events/event/trade/wp7/wp7-79th-2024>. Delegates attending the meeting are required to register online at <https://indico.un.org/event/1007285/>. In the event of difficulties with electronic registration, please contact the secretariat by e-mail ([nilsesm@un.org](mailto:nilsesm@un.org)).



14. Other business.
15. Election of officers.
16. Adoption of the report.

## **II. Annotations**

### **1. Adoption of the agenda**

The Working Party will adopt the agenda.

*Documentation:* Annotated provisional agenda (ECE/CTCS/WP.7/2024/1)

### **2. Matters arising since the last session**

#### **(a) Recent developments in the United Nations, the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe and its subsidiary bodies**

The secretariat will present recent developments in the United Nations system, the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) and the Steering Committee on Trade Capacity and Standards (SCTCS) having an impact on the work of the Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards (WP.7).

#### **(b) Recent developments in other organizations**

Representatives of other organizations active in the area of agricultural quality standards will provide information about their activities.

### **3. Working Procedures of the Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards**

At its 2022 session, the Working Party decided to establish an open working group to conduct a review of its Terms of Reference and Working Procedures.

At its seventy-eighth session in 2023, the Working Party agreed on revisions to its Terms of Reference, which were subsequently approved by the ninth session of the Steering Committee on Trade Capacity and Standards on 26–28 June 2024. The Working Party further decided to continue the review of its Working Procedures and to incorporate during the process the views of Specialized Sections.

During 2024, the Working Procedures were placed on the agenda of all Specialized Section meetings to invite the input of participating delegations. The open working group further met in one online meeting to finalize its proposal.

The Working Party is invited to consider the proposed revised Working Procedures.

*Documentation:* Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards: Working Procedures

Revised Working Procedures for the Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards (ECE/CTCS/WP.7/2024/3)

Revised Working Procedures for the Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards – comparison to the 2018 version (ECE/CTCS/WP.7/2024/INF.1)

### **4. Specialized Section on Standardization of Fresh Fruit and Vegetables**

In 2024, the Specialized Section held one regular session as well as several online meetings of the rapporteur's groups working to revise the standard for pears and the informal reference

list on citrus fruit varieties. It also held online meetings of the working group set up to review selected ECE standards from a food loss and waste perspective.

The Specialized Section submitted the following documents for adoption by the Working Party:

*Documentation:* Report of the seventy-second session of the Specialized Section on Standardization of Fresh Fruit and Vegetables (ECE/CTCS/WP.7/GE.1/2024/2)

Standard for sweet potatoes (ECE/CTCS/WP.7/2024/4)

Revised standard for courgettes (ECE/CTCS/WP.7/2024/5)

Revised standard for headed cabbages (ECE/CTCS/WP.7/2024/6)

Revised standard for leafy vegetables (ECE/CTCS/WP.7/2024/7)

Revised informal reference list of citrus fruit varieties (ECE/CTCS/WP.7/2024/8)

## 5. Specialized Section on Standardization of Dry and Dried Produce

In 2024, the Specialized Section held one regular session as well as several online meetings of the ad-hoc drafting group working to develop a code of good practice for food loss and waste reduction in dry and dried produce. The Specialized Section submitted the following documents for adoption by the Working Party:

*Documentation:* Report of the seventy-first session of the Specialized Section on Standardization of Dry and Dried Produce (ECE/CTCS/WP.7/GE.2/2024/2)

Standard for whole dried rosehip (ECE/CTCS/WP.7/2024/9)

Revised standard for almond kernels (ECE/CTCS/WP.7/2024/10)

Revised standard for blanched almond kernels (ECE/CTCS/WP.7/2024/11)

Revised standard for inshell almonds (ECE/CTCS/WP.7/2024/12)

Revised standard for dried tomatoes (ECE/CTCS/WP.7/2024/13)

Revised standard for dates (ECE/CTCS/WP.7/2024/14)

Revised standard for inshell walnuts (ECE/CTCS/WP.7/2024/15)

Explanatory material for almond kernels (ECE/CTCS/WP.7/2024/16)

Explanatory material for cashew kernels (ECE/CTCS/WP.7/2024/17)

## 6. Specialized Section on Standardization of Seed Potatoes

In 2024, the Specialized Section held one regular session and several online meetings of the rapporteur's group working on a full review of the standard for seed potatoes.

The Specialized Section submitted the following documents for adoption by the Working Party:

*Documentation:* Report of the fifty-first session of the Specialized Section on Standardization of Seed Potatoes (ECE/CTCS/WP.7/GE.6/2024/2)

The position of the Specialized Section on Standardization of Seed Potatoes on herbicide carryover (ECE/CTCS/WP.7/2024/18)

## **7. Specialized Section on Standardization of Meat**

In 2024, the Specialized Section held one regular session as well as several online meetings of the rapporteur's groups working to revise the standard for ovine meat – carcasses and cuts, and the rapporteur's group on digitization of the standard for bovine meat – carcasses and cuts.

The Specialized Section submitted the following documents for adoption by the Working Party:

*Documentation:* Report of the thirty-second session of the Specialized Section on Standardization of Meat (ECE/CTCS/WP.7/GE.11/2024/2)

## **8. Capacity-building and promotional activities**

Delegations are invited to report on capacity-building and promotional work over the past year, inform of upcoming events and trainings as well as available e-learning and other resources for capacity-building.

Delegations are also invited to present their needs for capacity-building on the implementation and use of standards, and on food loss and waste reduction. The Working Party will discuss how it might assist in addressing these needs drawing on its experience.

## **9. Sustainable food systems and resource efficiency**

### **(a) Digitalization**

The United Nations Food Systems Summit, held in 2021, emphasized the importance of adopting a food systems approach for implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). To realize SDGs and deliver healthy and nutritious diets for all, the global food system needs to become more productive, inclusive, environmentally sustainable, and resilient.

Digitalization has an important role to play in increasing productivity, improving the functioning of value chains, and enabling measures to trace sustainability aspects of food production. Thus, and in follow-up to the seventieth session of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe held in 2023 under the theme “Digital and green transformations for sustainable development in the ECE region”, the 2023 session the Working Party included discussions on the role of digitalization in ensuring efficient agricultural trade with a focus on the needs and current solutions for national inspection bodies. As several delegations remarked on the usefulness of these discussions, the Working Party decided to devote time for an extended discussion on digitalization at its 2024 session.

This agenda item will consist of a roundtable on the roles of digitalization to ensure efficient agricultural trade. Delegations will share experiences of recent developments in their countries and organizations to digitize agricultural trade processes, and discuss potential future work of the Working Party in this regard.

### **(b) Food loss and waste**

Over the past years, the Working Party has continued to focus on prevention and reduction of food loss and waste in support of SDG Target 12.3 on halving food loss by 2030. The work has included the organization of awareness-raising events and the tools and guidance documents, including the Code of Good Practice: Reducing food loss and ensuring optimum handling of fresh fruit and vegetables along the value chain (ECE/TRADE/470), and the Simply Measuring - Quantifying Food Loss & Waste: UNECE food loss and waste measuring methodology for fresh produce supply chains (ECE/TRADE/453).

Currently, under the Specialized Section on Standardization of Fresh Fruit and Vegetables an ad-hoc working group is reviewing selected standards from a food loss and waste perspective, while in the Specialized Section on Standardization of Dry and Dried Produce a code of good practice for reducing food loss in dry and dried produce is under development.

This agenda item will consist of an update by the secretariat of ongoing work on food loss and waste, followed by a discussion on potential future work of the Working Party on food loss and waste prevention and reduction.

*Documentation:* Accelerating the transition towards a circular economy in the Economic Commission for Europe region: focus on reducing food loss and waste (ECE/CTCS/2024/9)

Report of the Steering Committee on Trade Capacity and Standards on its ninth session (ECE/CTCS/2024/2)

## 10. Harmonized System codes for fresh and dried fruit

At its 2023 sessions, the Specialized Section on Standardization of Fresh Fruit and Vegetables and the Specialized Sections on Dry and Dried Produce discussed the lack of granularity for some Harmonized System (HS) codes for fresh and dried fruit and the impact this has on the ability to analyse trade at individual product level.

Following the meetings, the secretariat was informed that the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) had submitted a proposal to the World Customs Organization (WCO) for changes to HS codes for tropical fruit. Thus, at the 2024 session of the Specialized Section on Standardization of Fresh Fruit and Vegetables a representative of FAO was invited to give a presentation on the background and content of its proposal to revise HS codes for tropical fresh fruit, which had been submitted by FAO to the Harmonized System Review Sub-Committee (RSC) of the WCO.

The secretariat will provide an update on recent developments on this topic following discussions on this topic at the Specialized Section on Standardization of Fresh Fruit and Vegetables and the Specialized Section on Standardization of Dry and Dried Produce in 2024.

## 11. Use and impact of the agricultural quality standards

As part of its efforts to document the use and impact of the standards, in 2023 the secretariat in cooperation with the WP.7 Bureau launched a survey on the application of ECE standards and their link to relevant legislative frameworks in participating countries. The questionnaire sought to assess to which degree ECE standards are referenced in national legislation and implemented in a voluntary vs mandatory manner. The answers showed that the mandatory link is strongest in countries that are members of the European Union, which have harmonized its mandatory standards for fresh fruit and vegetables with ECE standards.

As ECE agricultural quality standards are also frequently used on a voluntary basis by private sector in trade (i.e. as part of or referenced in commercial contracts), fully assessing their importance would also require understanding the extent they are used or referenced in commercial contracts. As this concerns private sector transactions, such information is not readily available. To document such use, one potential avenue could be to working with industry associations to survey major traders. In the case of dry and dried produce, the International Nuts and Dried Fruit Council has expressed willingness to assist with reaching out to its members to conducting such a survey.

The Working Party is invited to discuss ways to further document the use of the ECE standards. Delegations are invited to provide further information regarding the use of ECE agricultural standards in their country.

## 12. Future work

The Working Party will decide on its future work.

### 13. Programme of work of the Working Party for 2025

The secretariat will present the Working Party's draft annual Programme of work for 2025.

The Working Party will be invited to adopt the Programme of work and recommend it to SCTCS for endorsement.

*Documentation:* Programme of work of the Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards for 2025 (ECE/CTCS/WP.7/2024/19)

### 14. Other business

The secretariat will inform of discussions of the bureau on scheduling of meetings.

Delegations will be invited to take up other issues not previously addressed during the session.

### 15. Election of officers

The Working Party will elect a chair and one or two vice-chair(s) for a one-year term.

### 16. Adoption of the report

The Working Party will adopt the report of the seventy-ninth session of the Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards.

*Documentation:* Report of the seventy-ninth session of the Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards (ECE/CTCS/WP.7/2024/2).

## III. Tentative timetable

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Monday, 11 November	10:00–13:00	Items 1 to 4
	15:00–18:00	Items 5 to 8
Tuesday, 12 November	10:00–13:00	Item 9a (roundtable)
	15:00–18:00	Items 9b to 15
Wednesday, 13 November	10:00–13:00	Item 16

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