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### Economic Commission for Europe

#### Committee on Trade

#### Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards

#### Specialized Section on Standardization of Seed Potatoes

#### Fortieth session

Geneva, 14-16 March 2011

## Report of the Specialized Section on Standardization of Seed Potatoes

### I. Introduction

1. The meeting was chaired by Mr. Pier Giacomo Bianchi (Italy). Ms. Virginia Cram-Martos, Director of the Trade and Timber Division, opened the meeting.

### II. Attendance

2. Representatives of the following countries attended the meeting: Austria, Belgium, Canada, Czech Republic, Denmark, Egypt, Finland, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Israel, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Pakistan, Romania, Russian Federation, Switzerland, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and United States of America.

### III. Adoption of the agenda

*Documentation:* ECE/TRADE/C/WP.7/GE.6/2011/1

3. The delegations adopted the provisional agenda with proposed changes and amendments.

### IV. Matters of interest since the last session

*Documentation:* Report of the Working Party ECE/TRADE/C/WP.7/2010/16  
1985 version of the Geneva Protocol

Proposals on revising Geneva Protocol (INF.1, Informal document)

4. The secretariat informed the participants that the Working Party, at its November 2010 session, had approved the 2010 version of the Standard, the changes to the cover page of the UNECE agricultural quality standards, and the amendments to the working procedures concerning the intersessional approval procedure.

5. The secretariat presented the draft text of the Geneva Agreement, which is intended to replace the 1985 version of the Geneva Protocol. The Specialized Section supported in general the text of the Agreement. The delegates agreed to:

(a) Recommend the following wording of paragraph 8: "Countries initiate the development of new or revision of the existing standards to reflect changing production, marketing, inspection and regulatory conditions. Nevertheless, after the standards have been adopted and for their effective practical application by producers, traders and inspection services, each specialized section sets the publication of new versions of the standards to an agreed time frame to provide for stability in use of the standards."

(b) Add the following provision to paragraph 10: "Agree to inform the Working Party of the changes, additions or omissions that they intend to introduce when implementing the internationally agreed standards at the national level."

## **V. Information on the results of the meetings of the Bureau**

*Documentation:* Meeting of the Bureau (GE.6/BUR/2010/6)

Report of the Bureau meeting in Changins (INF.2, Informal document)

6. The Chair informed the participants about the results of the Extended Bureau meetings held in Bandung, Indonesia, in October 2010 and in Changins, Switzerland, in January 2011. The Specialized Section thanked the authorities of Indonesia and Switzerland for having hosted these meetings.

## **VI. Standard and list of diseases and pests**

*Documentation:* The Standard (ECE/TRADE/C/WP.7/GE.6/2011/2)

List of diseases and pests

([www.unece.org/trade/agr/standard/potatoes/ListOfDiseasesAndPests.htm](http://www.unece.org/trade/agr/standard/potatoes/ListOfDiseasesAndPests.htm))

7. The Specialized Section decided to rename the list as "List of diseases, pests and defects" to allow for defects other than those caused by diseases and pests. It also decided to draw up a definition of "external defect" bearing in mind its implications for the tolerances in the Standard. There might be a need to change the title of section A in annex III to read: "Tolerances for defects allowed for seed potato tubers".

8. The Specialized Section decided to have a discussion on the allowed limits for different types of external defects for tubers to be considered countable/scoreable within the tolerances. The delegations of Germany and India volunteered to provide pictures of shrivelled tubers and growth cracks for inclusion in the list.

9. The Specialized Section asked the Working Group consisting of the delegations of Germany, India, the Netherlands (rapporteur) and the United States to prepare a discussion on extending the list to cover external defects for the next meeting of the Extended Bureau. Countries were invited to send pictures and suggestions to the Working Group and the secretariat.

## VII. Internal temperature-shock injuries

*Documentation:* Proposal on temperature-shock injuries (INF.3, Informal document)  
Tolerances for wet rot (INF.7, Informal document)

10. Following the discussion started at the Extended Bureau meeting in Bandung, the Specialized Section adopted the following definition of chilling injury for inclusion in annex VII:

"Chilling injury consists of internal damage to the tuber caused by exposure to temperatures slightly below or slightly above freezing, even for a relatively short period of time. A greyish discoloration predominantly of the vascular tissue can occur within hours after exposure. Chilling injury results in a tuber with no, or very poor, germination."

11. The Specialized Section decided to distinguish chilling from frost injuries by grouping the latter with the tolerances for dry and wet rot. In section A of annex III entry 2 was renamed as "Dry and wet rot not caused by pests listed under section B below, including wet breakdown due to extreme temperatures" and entry 8 as "Chilling injury". The Specialized Section decided to establish the tolerance for chilling injuries at 2 per cent for all categories other than Pre-basic TC.

12. The Specialized Section established a Working Group composed of the delegations of Belgium (rapporteur), Canada, Russian Federation, United Kingdom and the United States to advise on whether entry 2 in annex III needed to be split into separate entries for dry and wet rots and, in the case of splitting, suggest the tolerances for each type of rot.

## VIII. Silver scurf

*Documentation:* Discussion paper by the United States (GE.6/BUR/2010/5)

13. The Specialized Section agreed on the following common position on silver scurf:

- The cause of silver scurf is the fungus, *Helminthosporium solani*, which is spread by infected seed pieces and potato debris in soil. This disease disfigures the potato surface and separates the epidermis from the tuber, causing excess moisture loss and shrivelling of tubers during the storage period.
- As with all certification programmes, a standard for silver scurf has to take into consideration the feasibility and concerns of buyer as well as seller. Tubers can become infected with silver scurf in the field as well as in storage. Progression of the disease is slowed down below 7° C and below 90 per cent relative humidity. The optimal spread of the spores happens during handling of the tubers. Chemical treatments are limited.
- Research indicates that there is no correlation between the percentage of the surface of the tuber affected and the potential contamination towards the rest of the tubers and/or the next crop. Surveillance of the disease indicates that it is ubiquitous in potato-production systems.
- The effect of the silver scurf on tubers is regulated in the UNECE Standard through the tolerance for shrivelled tubers, i.e. tubers which have become excessively dehydrated and wrinkled, as these tubers lose vigour in the progeny crop.

14. The Specialized Section decided not to create a separate tolerance for silver scurf and to cover this defect under the entry for shrivelled tubers. To emphasize the correlation between shrivelled tubers and silver scurf, the Specialized Section amended the entry for

shrivelled tubers to read: "Shrivelled tubers: Tubers which have become excessively dehydrated and wrinkled, including dehydration caused by silver scurf".

## **IX. Practices in cutting tubers for internal defects during inspection**

15. Provisions on internal defects in the Standard imply that tubers are cut during inspection. National Designated Authorities have procedures for doing that. The Specialized Section approved the recommendation by the Extended Bureau not to include in the Standard specific provisions on cutting tubers. However, the delegations amended section D of the provisions concerning quality to reflect the fact that cutting tubers may be part of the inspection process. That section was also renamed as "D. Sampling for lot inspection".

16. The Specialized Section agreed to consider extension of provisions of section D to address sampling referred to annexes other than annex III. The delegations of Germany and Switzerland volunteered to prepare a discussion paper on that issue for the October meeting of the Extended Bureau.

## **X. Crop rotation practices**

17. The Specialized Section agreed to discontinue the discussion on this topic, as recommended by the Extended Bureau. To recognize the importance of crop rotation, the delegations decided to amend paragraph 6 in annex II to read: "Depending on the circumstances and character of potato production in the country, requirements for isolation and rotation of the crop may be considered".

## **XI. Questionnaire on varietal identity and purity**

*Documentation:* Varietal identity and purity (ECE/TRADE/C/WP.7/GE.6/2011/3)

18. The Specialized Section approved the draft questionnaire on varietal identity and purity and asked the secretariat to send it out to countries and to summarize the information received. At the October meeting of the Extended Bureau, the delegations of Germany (rapporteur), France, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom will suggest how that information could be used to amend the Standard.

## **XII. Statistical comparability of the post-harvest evaluation results**

*Documentation:* Annex IX of the Standard (ECE/TRADE/C/WP.7/GE.6/2011/2)

19. The Specialized Section approved the additional provisions on bulking samples recommended by the Extended Bureau with the following amendment: "Bulking will have an impact on the confidence interval of the test".

## **XIII. Reproductive cycles**

*Documentation:* Summary of survey results (INF.4, Informal document)

20. The Specialized Section took note of the results of the survey on the number of field generations allowed in national seed-potato certification schemes. The delegations agreed to change the definition of the "Generation number" in annex VII to read: "Field generation number: The number of growing cycles since the first introduction in the field after micropropagation or clonal selection."

21. The Specialized Section asked the delegation of Germany and the secretariat to complete the national UNECE/EU comparison tables with the survey information and to send them out to countries for approval. At its October meeting, the Extended Bureau will decide on the need for continuing the work on field generations.

#### **XIV. Validity for conformity (grade inspection) certificate**

*Documentation:* Validity of conformity certificate (INF.5, Informal document)

22. The Specialized Section took note of the updated information on the validity length of the national conformity certificates.

#### **XV. Demonstration trials**

*Documentation:* Demonstration trials protocol (ECE/TRADE/C/WP.7/GE.6/2011/4)  
Proposals by United Kingdom (INF.6, Informal document)

23. The delegation of the Russian Federation made a presentation on the results of the preliminary demonstration trials and offered to host the 2011 round of trials. The Specialized Section thanked the Russian Federation for the offer and encouraged countries to participate in the trials by sending their samples no later than mid-April.

24. The Specialized Section noted with appreciation that the UNECE Standard for Seed Potatoes had been used in the Russian Federation as a basis for the national standard and had also been introduced as the reference standard within the voluntary certification scheme.

25. The delegation of the United Kingdom presented a paper on how to organize plots to train inspectors. The training plots could be designed to also incorporate demonstration trial plots. The delegations thought that the paper could be usefully worked into guidelines on training inspectors. The Specialized Section asked the Working Group composed of Egypt, the Netherlands, the Russian Federation, Switzerland and the United Kingdom (rapporteur) to work on the guidelines and to present its first draft at the Extended Bureau meeting in October.

#### **XVI. Update of information on national certification schemes**

*Documentation:* National certification schemes ([www.unece.org/trade/agr/welcome.htm](http://www.unece.org/trade/agr/welcome.htm)).

26. The Specialized Section asked the secretariat to send out a message to the delegations, indicating the UNECE web addresses for the summary tables on the national certification schemes and inviting countries to update them. This message could be circulated together with the amended UNECE/EU comparison tables referred to in section XIII of the report.

## **XVII. Promotion of the Standard and programme of meetings**

*Documentation:* Meeting of the Bureau (GE.6/BUR/2010/6)  
Revised promotional leaflet (INF.6, Informal document)

27. The Specialized Section decided to review the promotional leaflet at the meeting of the Extended Bureau in October. The delegations were asked to send comments and pictures for the leaflet to the secretariat.

28. The Specialized Section agreed on the provisional programme of its future meetings:  
2011:

- Demonstration trials workshop (Russian Federation, 11-13 July)
- Extended Bureau meeting (Czech Republic, 3-5 October)

2012:

- Extended Bureau meeting back-to-back with the World Potato Congress (Edinburgh, 27-30 May). The delegation of the United Kingdom offered to host the Extended Bureau meeting and to liaise with the organizing committee of the congress
- Extended Bureau meeting (Canada, late September/beginning of October)

2013:

- Annual session of the Specialized Section (Geneva, March)
- Extended Bureau meeting (United States, first week in October)

## **XVIII. Future work**

29. The Specialized Section decided to include the following items into its programme of work:

- Extension of the Standard to other species, e.g. to *Solanum phureja* (United Kingdom, United States)
- Quote ISPM (International Standard For Phytosanitary Measures) 33 and update the reference to NAPPO in the introduction to the Standard (Canada, United States)
- Definitions of parent material, clonal selection and clonal multiplication (Belgium, Germany, Netherlands, United States)
- Definition of micropropagative multiplication (United Kingdom, Russian Federation); draw on the existing internationally agreed definitions
- Requirements on sprouted tubers
- Certification of cut seed tubers (United States, Netherlands, Canada, India, Pakistan)
- Class denomination; draw on the EU report and on information in the amended UNECE/EU comparison tables
- Indication of the field generation on the label
- Combination of mild and severe virus symptoms into one field tolerance; draw on the EU report

## **XIX. Election of officers**

30. The Specialized Section decided to elect Mr. Pier Giacomo Bianchi (Italy) as its Chair and Mr. Willem Schrage (United States) and Mr. John Kerr (United Kingdom) as its vice-chairs.

## **XX. Adoption of the report**

31. The Specialized Section adopted the report of its session.

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