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COMMITTEE FOR TRADE, INDUSTRY AND ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT

Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards
Sixtieth session, Geneva, 8 -10 November 2004

REPORT OF THE SIXTIETH SESSION

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

All of the new, revised and updated UNECE standards and recommendations are available on the UNECE website at: www.unece.org/trade/agr

Fresh fruit and vegetables:

Revised UNECE Standards adopted:

Cultivated Mushrooms (TRADE/WP.7/GE.1/2004/25/Add.2)
Kiwi Fruit (TRADE/WP.7/GE.1/2004/25/Add.3)
Peaches and Nectarines (TRADE/WP.7/GE.1/2004/25/Add.4(Part I))
Watermelons (TRADE/WP.7/GE.1/2004/25/Add.6)
Citrus Fruit (TRADE/WP.7/GE.1/2004/25/Add.7)

Revised and new UNECE Recommendations adopted:

Bilberries and Blueberries (TRADE/WP.7/GE.1/2004/25/Add.5)
Early and Ware Potatoes (TRADE/WP.7/GE.1/2004/7)
Cherries (TRADE/WP.7/GE.1/2004/25/Add.1)
Peaches and Nectarines (TRADE/WP.7/GE.1/2004/25/Add.4(Part II))
Truffles (TRADE/WP.7/GE.1/2004/25/Add.8)
Plums (see TRADE/WP. 7/GE.1/2004/25, para. 113)

Executive Summary *cont.***Dry and Dried Produce**

Revised UNECE Standards adopted: Inshell Pistachio Nuts.

Trial periods extended for one year:

Inshell Almonds (as amended in TRADE/WP.7/GE.2/2004/14/Add.1).

Pistachio Kernels and Peeled Pistachio Kernels.

Seed Potatoes

The revisions proposed to the UNECE Standard for Seed Potatoes (as proposed in documents TRADE/WP.7/2004/3 and Add.1 were adopted.

Meat

The text proposed as a new UNECE Standard for Llama Meat (TRADE/WP.7/2004/4) was adopted. It will be prepared by the secretariat for publication in print and on the website.

The revised UNECE Standard for Bovine Meat has been published.

Internationally Harmonized Produce Coding

The delegations of France and Slovakia gave short presentations on coding of produce in their countries. The Working Party concluded that currently there did not seem to be a need for international coordination work of produce coding by UNECE as this was already being done by other organizations. The secretariat was asked to monitor the events in this area and report to the Working Party as necessary.

Compatibility of the control certificate with the UN Layout Key

A representative of UN/CEFACT explained recent developments in electronic trade documents. The Working Party decided to align the UNECE control certificate with the UN Layout Key to prepare the certificate for electronic applications.

Terms of reference for the Working Party and the Specialized Sections

A draft of the new terms of reference was presented. It will be further discussed in a working group.

Sales packages

The working group was enlarged and will continue to discuss this topic in order to present an official document at the next session.

Point of application of UNECE standards

Delegations were invited to consult with their trade on this question. The delegation of Germany will prepare a proposal based on provisions in the EC regulations for a new wording in the standard layout, which would acknowledge that fact that UNECE standards can be used in all stages of marketing. The proposal will be transmitted to the specialized sections GE.1 and GE.2 for consideration.

Workshops

Information was provided on workshops, seminars and training courses held in 2004 or planned for 2005.

Evaluation of the standard-setting process

A questionnaire on the standard-setting process in UNECE will be developed, which will be sent to delegations in the course of 2005. The questionnaire will be published in addendum 1 to this report (TRADE/WP.7/2004/10/Add.1).

Opening of the session

1. The Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards held its sixtieth session in Geneva from 8 to 10 November 2004. Mr. David Priester (United States) chaired the meeting. The session was opened by Ms. Virginia Cram-Martos, Chief of the Trade Policy and Governmental Cooperation Branch of the Trade Development and Timber Division of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE).
2. Welcoming the delegations, Ms. Cram-Martos said that the agenda of the meeting was again very full owing to the large amount of work from the Specialized Sections which had to be reviewed. At this session, nine revised standards, five revised recommendations, one new recommendation and one new standard were being proposed to the Working Party for adoption.
3. The agenda also included questions of a general nature, such as the new terms of reference for the Working Party, the alignment of the control certificate with the UN Layout Key and the possibilities for creating an electronic control certificate, the definition of sales packages and a request from the secretariat to assist in developing a questionnaire for reviewing the work of WP.7 and supporting processes as part of the regular review of UNECE work programmes.
4. She said that the secretariat was very pleased with the progress made and with the appreciation and interest shown by national delegations for this work. In 2004 it had been possible to organize a workshop in Chisinau, Republic of Moldova, on international trade in agricultural produce and a seminar on the implementation of the UNECE standards for meat in Vilnius. She thanked the Governments of the Republic of Moldova and Lithuania for their support to these events. For both meetings good feedback had been received and follow-up actions were planned in 2005, as well as similar activities in different countries.
5. Ms. Cram-Martos also expressed her satisfaction with the excellent cooperation with other organizations. She noted that the European Union had aligned its standards even more closely with those of UNECE. As part of the World Health Organization (WHO) Global Strategy on Diet Physical Activity and Health, UNECE in cooperation with WHO, Codex Alimentarius and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), had produced a series of 12 postcards promoting quality standards as well as the consumption of fruit and vegetables.
6. The UNECE Standard for Bovine Meat had been published in English and the other language versions, as well as the standards for Chicken Meat and Ovine Meat, would follow shortly.
7. She said that the secretariat was still short of resources, which meant that many invitations to workshops and seminars had to be declined.
8. Concluding, Ms. Cram-Martos informed delegations that in 2005 a major independent evaluation of UNECE would take place and that they might receive requests in this regard from their capitals. She expressed confidence that agricultural quality standards development would be supported by this evaluation, which would support arguments for allocating more resources to this work.

Participation

9. The session was attended by representatives of the following countries: Czech Republic, Finland; France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Morocco, Poland, Slovakia, Spain, Turkey, United Kingdom and United States of America.
10. The European Community (EC) was also represented.
11. A representative of the Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Programme attended the session.

ITEM 1: Adoption of the agenda
TRADE/WP.7/2004/1/ INF.1

12. The agenda was adopted with the following additions:
- INF.1 (Updated agenda)
 - INF.2 (Matters of interest)
 - INF.3 (UNeDocs presentation)
 - INF.4 (Sales packages)
 - INF.5 (Workshop report, Republic of Moldova)
 - INF.6 (Training course report, Mojmirovce (Slovakia))
 - INF.7 (Achievement report/ questionnaire)
 - INF.8 (Letter from Copa-Cogeca (Committee of Agricultural Organizations in the European Union and General Confederation of Agricultural Co-operatives in the European Union)).
13. The following documents were deleted from the agenda: TRADE/WP.7/2004/2, 4/Add.1, 5, 6 and 8.

ITEM 2: Matters of interest arising since the last session

Committee for Trade, Industry and Enterprise Development
INF.2

14. The secretariat introduced an excerpt from the report of the 8th session of the Committee for Trade, Industry and Enterprise Development. At that session the Committee had agreed to the Working Party's proposal to abolish the Specialized Section on Standardization of Early and Ware Potatoes and include this work on the agenda of the Specialized Section on Standardization of Fresh Fruit and Vegetables. The work of the Working Party received strong support from the delegations of the Russian Federation and the European Union.

Codex Alimentarius

15. The delegation of the Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Programme informed the Working Party that the Codex Alimentarius Commission at its 27th session (July 2004) had adopted the Codex Standard for Oranges (final adoption at Step 8) and the Codex Standard for Tomatoes (preliminary adoption at Step 5). The Standard for Oranges had been harmonized with the corresponding provisions for oranges in the UNECE Standard for Citrus Fruits.

16. The Standard for Tomatoes was being circulated for comments at Step 6 and for consideration at the next session of the Codex Committee on Fresh Fruits and Vegetable, in May 2005. In addition, the Commission amended the Code of Practice for the Packaging and Transport of Fresh Fruits and Vegetables by deleting the term "tropical" throughout the text to make it applicable to the packaging and transport of all fresh fruits and vegetables.

17. The other standards under study e.g. apples, rambutan, maturity requirements and the list of small berry varieties for table grapes, as well as the Guidelines for the Quality Control of Fresh Fruits and Vegetables, were being discussed in the relevant working groups and would be available for circulation and comments in late December 2004 or early January 2005.

18. Also open for comments until the end of February 2005 was the Standard Layout for the Codex Standard for Fresh Fruits and Vegetables, whose quality provisions are harmonized with those of the UNECE Standard Layout for Fresh Fruits and Vegetables.

European Union

19. The delegation of the European Commission informed the meeting that since the Working Party's fifty-ninth session, the EC had continued work on aligning its standards with those of UNECE. EC standards for the following produce had been re-published: Apples, Pears, Cherries, Kiwis, Citrus Fruit, Peaches and Nectarines, Watermelons and Cultivated Mushrooms.

20. At the time of the meeting, six countries had an agreement with the EC on recognition of quality controls: Switzerland, Morocco, South Africa, Israel, India and New Zealand. Negotiations are under way with Turkey and Kenya.

OECD Scheme

21. The Vice-Chairperson of the OECD Scheme, Ms. U. Bickelmann (Germany), provided information on the outcome of the 62nd Plenary Meeting of the OECD Scheme for the Application of International Standards for Fruit and Vegetables.

22. Morocco had been welcomed as a new member of the Scheme.

23. The Scheme had adopted the following explanatory brochures: Cultivated Mushrooms, Beans and Strawberries. The brochure for strawberries would be published in three languages: English, French and Spanish. The following work is planned to be finalized:

- In 2005: Table Grapes, Potatoes, Cucumbers, Kiwi Fruit and the revision of the guidelines on objective tests.
- In 2006: Apples, Pears and Citrus Fruit.

24. The major part of the Plenary Meeting was dedicated to discussing the reform of the Scheme. The following decisions were taken:

- To employ technical assistance (private person or institute) for creating draft brochures. This work was currently being done by national delegations and it was hoped that outsourcing the work would speed up the creation of explanatory material, which should be available for all standards (possibly not for all in the form of brochures, but sometimes only explaining specific parts).
- To create a steering committee to supervise the technical assistance work; the committee would be selected from the members of the Plenary Meeting who were interested in the produce in question.
- To improve the electronic publication of brochures (currently in pdf format), possibly publishing the text in a Word document and the photographs in a PowerPoint presentation for easier use at training sessions.
- To increase cooperation with other organizations. To develop a memorandum of understanding with UNECE, making the existing cooperation more visible, and intensifying it if possible.
- To create technical support for the training of inspectors and define a curriculum for such training.
- To create distance learning tools in cooperation with FAO.
- To improve the presentation of results on the website.

25. Several delegations expressed interest in the programme of work presented, especially in the training aspect. They believed that it would be interesting for delegations that are not members of the OECD Scheme to be informed about the new organization of work and the results that were available. They proposed that this be done in a presentation during the GE.1 session in March 2005.

26. Ms. Bickelmann replied that it would be possible to present the new ideas for the work of the Scheme at the GE.1 session, but that owing to the short time remaining until that meeting the first steps of the reform (new website, new format of electronic brochures) might not yet be completed.

ITEM 3: Specialized Section on Standardization of Fresh Fruit and Vegetables

27. The Chairman of the Specialized Section, Mr. David Holliday (United Kingdom), provided information on the outcome of the fiftieth session of the Specialized Section. He said that, in addition to the work on standards, a representative of WHO had informed the meeting about the WHO Strategy on Diet, Physical Activity and Health, in which the inadequate intake of fruit and vegetables was seen as one of the risk factors for non-communicable diseases (such as cancer, heart disease and diabetes). He said that according to the Strategy, international standards could include steps to promote fruit and vegetable consumption.

3(a) Texts recommended for adoption as revised standards

28. The Working Party adopted the following texts as revised standards, as proposed by the Specialized Section:

- Cultivated Mushrooms (TRADE/WP.7/GE.1/2004/25/Add.2)
- Kiwi Fruit (TRADE/WP.7/GE.1/2004/25/Add.3)
- Peaches and Nectarines (TRADE/WP.7/GE.1/2004/25/Add.4(Part I))
- Watermelons (TRADE/WP.7/GE.1/2004/25/Add.6)
- Citrus Fruit (TRADE/WP.7/GE.1/2004/25/Add.7)

29. The Working Party adopted the text for Bilberries and Blueberries (TRADE/WP.7/GE.1/2004/25/Add.5) (proposed for adoption as a revised standard) as a UNECE recommendation for a one-year trial period, because it felt that some research was needed to ensure the correct marking of the names “Bilberries” or “Blueberries” in different languages. The delegation of France would enquire as to the correct denomination from different producer countries and submit a proposal to the Specialized Section at its next session.

30. The Working Party also adopted the joint standard for Early and Ware Potatoes (TRADE/WP.7/GE.1/2004/7) (proposed as a revised standard) as a UNECE recommendation for a one-year trial period to allow for comments from interested parties. The trade organization EUROPATAT had indicated to the secretariat that some of their members were not in favour of a joint standard, but to date no written justification for this had been submitted.

31. The Working Party took note of additions to the list of varieties of Plums and Pears.

3(b) Texts recommended for adoption as UNECE recommendations

32. The Working Party adopted the text for Cherries (TRADE/WP.7/GE.1/2004/25/Add.1) as a UNECE recommendation for a two-year trial period, with two corrections in the quality tolerances.

33. It also adopted the text for Peaches and Nectarines (TRADE/WP.7/GE.1/2004/25/Add.4 (Part II)) as a UNECE recommendation for a two-year trial period. The question of whether the firmness test should be done with or without skin would be discussed following the trial period.

34. It further adopted the text for Truffles (TRADE/WP.7/GE.1/2004/25/Add.8) as a new UNECE recommendation for a two-year trial period, with a correction made to the annex on varieties in the French version.

35. The Working Party extended for one further year the trial period for the inter-specific hybrids in the UNECE Recommendation for Plums. The hybrid “Aprium” was removed from the recommendation because the product is considered to be closer to apricots. In the opinion of several delegations, the hybrids did not cause problems in trade, had a low market volume and could be treated either as plums or as apricots. It was proposed that if no further information was available on the variety names at the next session of the Specialized Section, the hybrids should be deleted from the recommendation.

36. The Working Party took note of the provisional inclusion of new varieties in the standard for Apples until the end of the trial period in 2005. It stressed that all applicants must demonstrate that the varieties applied for were new and traded internationally. The Working Party also took note of a letter from COPA-COGECA concerning their position on the minimum sizes for apples (INF.8).

37. The Working Party clarified that in the UNECE standards no changes to the minimum sizes for apples were currently envisaged but that in the context of aligning with UNECE Standards, the European legislation schedules that the minimum sizes for apples in the EU will be aligned with those of UNECE as of 1 August 2005. The Working Party also stressed that any proposal based on scientific data as well as any productive dialogue would be welcome at the Specialized Section session in March.

ITEM 4: Specialized Section on Standardization of Dry and Dried Produce (Fruit)

38. The Chairman of the Specialized Section, Mr. Bruno Cauquil (France) informed the Working Party on the outcome of the fiftieth session of the Specialized Section. Further to the work mentioned under 4 (a), (b), (c) and (d), new work had begun on a number of products:

- Blanched Almonds
- Dried Peaches
- Inshell Macadamia Nuts, Macadamia Kernels
- Inshell Pecans and Pecan Kernels
- Dried Tomatoes
- Peanuts.

39. The rapporteurs presented draft proposals, which were discussed and revised at the session or in working groups. Delegations were invited to send comments to the rapporteurs, who will prepare new texts for the next session based on the discussions at the session and the contributions received. It was also agreed that rapporteurs should, if possible, bring samples of products to facilitate the discussions.

40. For peanuts, the rapporteur (United States) had presented three different standards for peanut kernels and one for inshell peanuts in accordance with discussions with their industry. Owing to lack of time these texts were not discussed at the session but participants were invited to send comments to the rapporteur.

41. Work on a new standard for Dried Peppers will begin as soon as the relevant information can be collected by the rapporteur (Spain).

42. Further discussions were held on:

- Usefulness of the UNECE Conditions for Sale, which apparently were not being applied in trade
- Work on pulses (*légumes secs* in French)
- Future work on dried exotic fruit
- How to increase participation in the group.

4(a) Text recommended for adoption as revised UNECE standard

43. The UNECE Recommendation for Inshell Pistachio Nuts (as available on the UNECE website) was adopted as a revised UNECE Standard.

4(b) Texts recommended for adoption as UNECE recommendations (extension of trial for one year):

44. The trial periods for the UNECE recommendation for Inshell Almonds (as amended in TRADE/WP.7/GE.2/2004/14/Add.1) and for Pistachio Kernels and Peeled Pistachio Kernels (as on the website) were extended for one further year.

4 (c) Correction to the UNECE Standard for Dried Figs

45. The Working Party took note of the correction made to the UNECE Standard for Dried Figs (TRADE/WP.7/GE.2/2004/14/Add.2).

4(d) Information concerning the joint publication of the colour chart for walnut kernels by OECD and UNECE

46. The secretariat informed delegations that the colour chart for walnut kernels would be printed shortly but draft printouts would be sent beforehand to the delegations of the United States and France for verification.

ITEM 5: Specialized Section on Standardization of Seed Potatoes

47. The Chairman of the Specialized Section, Mr. Pier Giacomo Bianchi, informed the Working Party on the outcome of the thirty-fourth session of the Specialized Section and the work done by the extended bureau since then:

- Proposals to amend the Standard.
- Overview of the other issues which are under discussion for possible future amendments.
- Other initiatives of the Specialized Section.
- Extended bureau meetings of 2004 and the programme of activities for 2005.

5 (a) Text recommended for adoption as revised UNECE Standard

48. The Working Party adopted the text contained in TRADE/WP.7/2004/3 and TRADE/WP.7/2004/3/Add.1 as the revised UNECE Standard for Seed Potatoes. These documents incorporate changes in the following areas:

- Addition of a text on the International Plant Protection Convention to the introduction
- Introduction of provisions for shrivelled tubers.
- Completion of the list of pests/diseases from which seed potatoes are required to be free.
- Definition of viruses in the glossary.
- Consistent use of the term “national designated authority”.
- Sizing provisions.
- Consequential amendments to the summary table of tolerances.

5 (b) Information on meetings of the extended bureau:

49. The Extended Bureau met in Dublin, Ireland (5 to 7 July 2004) and in East Grand Forks – Minnesota, United States (4 to 6 October 2004). The Chairman thanked the authorities of these countries for organizing these events. At the meetings, a number of issues were discussed which will lead to the further development of the standard. Other subjects discussed included:

- Development of a two-day prototype seminar to be offered to countries wishing to improve their seed potato production or to importing countries wishing to be better informed about ordering seed from other countries
- Further development of a list of pests of concern for seed potatoes
- Establishment of a recognizable UNECE label for the standard.

ITEM 6: Specialized Section on Standardization of Meat

50. In the absence of the Chairman, the secretariat provided information on the outcome of the thirteenth session of the Specialized Section. Final corrections had been made to the texts for chicken meat, ovine meat, and bovine meat. The secretariat was now proceeding with the publication (see item 8). At the next session, the following draft texts would be discussed: standard for goat meat, standard for turkey meat and draft livestock standard. A maintenance strategy for UNECE meat standards had been decided. The standards would be reviewed every three years and amended if necessary. Urgent changes would be published on the UNECE website.

6 (a) New UNECE Standard Llama/Alpaca Meat - Carcasses and Cuts

51. The Working Party adopted the text contained in document TRADE/WP.7/2004/4 as the new UNECE Standard for Llama/Alpaca Meat – Carcasses and Cuts.

52. The delegation of France questioned why the standards for meat were usually directly proposed for adoption as UNECE Standards without first being tested as recommendations. The secretariat explained that this appeared to be due to the fact that the development of the standards for meat took longer than for other standards and usually already included meetings of rapporteurs in different countries where the provisions were tried out in practice before being agreed in the Standard.

53. The delegation of Slovakia said that for their national experts on meat classification the option to specify the time between slaughter and packing was missing in the standards. They said that they would ask their experts to prepare a proposal to the Specialized Section.

6 (b) Meeting of rapporteurs/Seminar on meat standards

54. The rapporteurs on porcine meat met in Warsaw (14 to 16 April 2004) and in Vilnius (25 to 28 October 2004). In addition, a seminar on the implementation of meat standards was held in Vilnius on 29 October. The revision of the standard should be finalized in 2005 at the meeting of the Specialized Section. Prior to the meeting, it is planned to hold a meeting of rapporteurs in the Lyon region in France.

ITEM 7: Internationally Harmonized Produce Coding

55. At the last session of the Specialized Section on Standardization of Fresh Fruit and Vegetables, the delegations of France, Slovakia and Turkey announced that they would send information on this topic to the secretariat.

Turkey

56. The delegation of Turkey reported that their union of chambers of commerce was currently implementing a project on produce coding. The draft guidelines had been sent to governmental and private sector institutions, who could comment on them until the end of November. Comments would also be sent from the Undersecretariat for Foreign Trade concerning the inclusion of quality requirements. Turkey would inform the UNECE secretariat on the results. Implementation of the guidelines was scheduled for the beginning of 2005.

France

57. Concerning produce coding, France bases its approach on the relevant European legislation:

- Directive 93/43
- Regulation 178/2002 (effective 1 January 2005), which makes the introduction of a traceability system mandatory.

58. France stressed that the regulation did not include any obligation concerning the means to be used but laid down the results to be achieved. Because of this, each party had to decide for itself which means to use to achieve the desired results.

59. The bar codes promoted by EAN were considered to be only one of the means available to ensure adequate traceability. Even if there existed cooperation between international bodies and EAN, it was not the place of international bodies to recommend one system of codification over another. For instance, the International Federation for Produce Coding, representing the interests of operators on the global level, could also establish recommendations on codification.

Slovakia

60. The delegation of Slovakia gave a presentation on the system of traceability used by the biggest producers' organization, covering a majority of fruit production in Slovakia (mainly apples).

61. That organization used an integrated system of linked computers and databases to ensure that all relevant information was available to all partners. Packages were marked with a bar code that contained a traceability code (lot number) and additional information (quality information not available yet).

62. This bar code was not used in retail because the retail trade used its own proprietary codes and markings.

Conclusion

63. The Working Party took note of the information provided. It decided that at present there did not seem to be a need for international coordination work on produce coding by UNECE, as this was already done by other organizations. The secretariat will monitor events in this area and report to the Working Party as necessary.

ITEM 8: Publications

8 (a) UNECE Standards for Meat

64. The UNECE Standard for Bovine Meat – Carcasses and Cuts (2004 edition) has been published in English. The texts in French and Russian will follow shortly. The standards for ovine meat and chicken meat will be submitted to the printers before the end of the year.

8 (b) Promotional postcards for fresh fruit and vegetables

65. Copies of the promotional postcard series are available from the secretariat in English, French, Russian and Spanish. The Chinese and Arabic versions will become available shortly. Further joint activities are planned with WHO and OECD in this area.

66. The delegation of the Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Programme said that the Codex Secretariat appreciated the work done on the cards and looked forward to future cooperation.

8 (c) Promotional booklet on the work and achievements of the Working Party

67. The secretariat has continued work on the booklet, which should be available in mid-2005.

ITEM 9: General questions concerning the work of WP.7 and its Specialized Sections

9 (a) Compatibility of the control certificate with the UN Layout Key INF.3

Background

68. In the Specialized Section on Standardization of Fresh Fruit and Vegetables, the delegation of the United Kingdom mentioned that the country's trade facilitation agency (SITPRO) had informed them that the present UNECE control certificate was not harmonized with the Layout Key for international trade documents recommended by the United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business (UN/CEFACT).

69. A further problem was that only a limited number of products were allowed to be included on each certificate. SITPRO would welcome a revision of the certificate, which would allow more products to be included.

70. As this topic would concern more than one specialized section, it was decided to discuss the issue in the Working Party.

Presentation by the United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business (UN/CEFACT)

71. A representative of UN/CEFACT, Mr. M. Pikart, presented the current work on electronic trade documents.

72. He explained some of the characteristics of modern supply chains:

- goods travel faster than information about them;
- supply chains were increasingly complex (an average of 27 operators in one supply chain);
- paperless trade was implemented within different processes but not between processes; therefore, a paper document has to be created to transfer the information – and this accounts for up to 10% of an entire transaction's costs.

73. Aligning a trade document to the UN Layout Key was the first step needed to pass to an electronic document. The Layout Key is a set of standards describing the format and semantics of trade documents.

74. Mr. Pikart said that the information contained in trade documents aligned with the Layout Key could, in principle, be transmitted in UN/EDIFACT messages, but that when deciding about the format for electronic trade documents it had been recognized that today's trade was still based on paper and therefore a solution was sought that combined both approaches (UNeDocs).

75. UNeDocs combined widely available technology (such as Acrobat reader, Internet Explorer) with XML technology, allowing the same document to be worked on, transmitted and viewed in different formats.

76. He said that to migrate the present UNECE control certificate it had first to be aligned with the Layout Key (defining format and semantics) in line with the United Nations Trade Data Elements Directory (UNTDDED). To move further towards electronic documents, a data model would then have to be created that would define the electronic document and services. At each step it was up to the Working Party to decide how far it wanted to continue in the process. He said that the World Customs Organization used the same format as described in the UNTDED, which was another advantage to aligning the control certificate with the Layout Key.

77. Information on UNeDocs can be found at: <http://www.UNeDocs.org>

Discussion and conclusion

78. The delegation of France said that during discussions on electronic certification in France, one of the major problems had been that of electronic signatures, and enquired as to whether similar problems had been experienced by UNeDocs. The delegations of the United States and the United Kingdom said that they had also had experienced problems with electronic signatures.

79. Mr. Pikart replied that he was aware that problems existed with electronic signatures and that a number of web services were available for this purpose. He clarified that the main goal of UNeDocs was to describe the information, not how it was treated.

80. The delegation of the United States informed the meeting that work on an electronic trade data system was being done by United States customs and APHIS (Animal Plant Health Inspection Service).

81. The delegation of the Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Programme said that the Codex Committee on Food Import and Export Inspection and Certification Systems (CCFICS) for its session to be held in Australia in December 2004 had put the development of guidelines for electronic certification on the agenda.

82. The Working Party decided to align the control certificate with the UN Layout Key. A working group consisting of the secretariat, the United Kingdom and UN/CEFACT, would prepare a draft proposal, which would be discussed at the next GE.1 session.

9 (b) Terms of reference for the Working Party and the Specialized Sections

83. In an analysis of the Geneva Protocol (see TRADE/WP.7/2001/6) the secretariat had found that many of the provisions contained therein could be included as comments in the standard layout. Other provisions (e.g. concerning an international agreement) were either obsolete or were being dealt with by other organizations.

84. At its previous session, the Working Party had agreed with this general assessment and had requested the secretariat to prepare the layout for new terms of reference of the Working Party and the specialized sections, combining texts at present contained in the Geneva Protocol, the Standard Layout and the Working Procedures. The first draft of this document is available as TRADE/WP.7/2004/7.

85. Several delegations welcomed the proposal. However, they felt that the commitment of Governments to implement agricultural quality standards in national legislation in order to facilitate trade, which had been contained in the existing Geneva Protocol, was missing and should be nevertheless be retained because it could serve as a justification for the work on standards. They also believed that the name "Geneva Protocol" should be retained. Some comments were made to the effect that the new procedure for decision taking was too complicated.

86. It was decided that a working group (United States, United Kingdom, European Community and Germany) would discuss the draft text in detail.

9 (c) Sales packages
INF.4

87. At its fifty-ninth session, the Working Party created a working group (European Community, United States) to examine the following questions:

- Which are the different packages used for sale to final consumer?
- What would be the best term to describe them?
- How should they be defined?
- What are the implications on marking for the different packages?

88. The working group presented a report on its analysis of the use of the different terms contained in UNECE and EU standards. It stated that some of the inconsistencies in the use of the term "sales package" are due to the manner in which the standards had been developed (over many years, by different people, in different languages). It recommended that all inconsistent terms should be replaced by one term. For the term "small package", the group suggested to use the term "sales package" as well, but to specify a maximum weight. Concerning prepackages, the problem was that definitions used in UNECE and the EU differed from that used by Codex Alimentarius.

89. The working group also regarded as a major problem UNECE's lack of a consistent set of definitions.

90. The Working Party decided that work should continue in the working group in order to:

- Decide which terms should be used in the UNECE Standard Layout and define them in an annex to the layout, including a glossary of synonyms.
- Review the existing standards and recommend changes to align with the glossary.

91. The delegations of the United States, European Community, Germany, France and the Czech Republic volunteered to participate in the working group. The working group will also request information from New Zealand.

(d) Point of application of UNECE standards

Background

92. The secretariat had raised the question of the point of application of UNECE standards in the Specialized Section meetings in 2003. Currently, it is fixed at the export-control stage. In practice, although UNECE standards are applied by countries in different ways (e.g. within the European Union the standards apply at all stages of marketing), some countries also apply the standards for their national trade. The secretariat had felt that this could usefully be reflected in the standard layout.

93. The specialized sections had referred the decision on this to the Working Party, as more than one area of work would be concerned. At the fifty-ninth session of the Working Party, the proposal had been welcomed by some delegations, but it was felt that if the reference to the point of application were to be deleted, then some sentence allowing for a certain loss of freshness at later stages of distribution was needed.

94. At that session, the following sentence concerning the point of application had been proposed:

“The purpose of the standard is to define the quality requirements of <name of the produce> after preparation and packaging.”

95. Although at that session delegations had considered this proposal interesting, they thought that it should be further discussed (see TRADE/WP.7/2003/6, paras. 128-129).

Discussion and conclusion

96. Several delegations were of the opinion that the text in the standard layout should take into account the fact that, in practice, UNECE standards were applied at all stages of trade.

97. The delegation of the United States felt that if a quality problem were discovered at a later stage of marketing it would be difficult to assign responsibility for this because it might be due to the producer/packer but also to inadequate storage in retail.

98. The Codex Secretariat informed the Working Party that Codex standards allowed for “free distribution” of the product on the territory of the importing country, and therefore applied both to the point of export or import and to further distribution and sale. Thus, the footnote applying across Codex standards for fresh fruits and vegetables (Section 1 – Definition of Produce) was included to take on board perishability of fresh produce and the application of UNECE standards at the export stage by stating that “*Governments, when indicating the acceptance of a Codex Standard for (...) should notify the Commission which provisions of the Standard would be accepted for application at the point of import, and which provisions would be accepted for application at the point of export*”.

99. Delegations were invited to consult with their trade on this question. The delegation of Germany offered to prepare a proposal, based on provisions in the EC regulations, for a new wording in the standard layout and transmit it for consideration to the Specialized Sections GE.1 and GE.2.

(e) Assessment of the implementation of UNECE Standards

100. The secretariat informed the meeting that no comments had been received concerning the information that had been provided at the latest GE.1 session.

ITEM 10: Workshops

101. The Working Party took note of information on various workshops/training courses that had taken place in 2004 or were scheduled for 2005.

Republic of Moldova: The secretariat reported on a Workshop on International Trade in Agriculture, which had been organized by UNECE and the Government of the Republic of Moldova. The Workshop had opened with a number of informal facilitated sessions in which participants from the private and public sector in that country analysed the advantages and challenges for Moldovan trade in agriculture, and proposed solutions. In the formal part of the Workshop, experts from OECD, WTO, UNCTAD and UNECE, as well as from the private sector, had provided information on the existing tools and standards in trade and answered questions raised by participants in the informal meetings. The meeting had closed with a round-table discussion, involving all participants, to develop an action plan for the development of Moldovan trade in agricultural products. Follow-up activities were planned for 2005.

Mojmirovce: The 9th International Training Course sponsored by OECD “Harmonization of fruit and vegetables quality assessment” had been held from 27 to 29 September 2004 in Mojmirovce (Slovakia). The programme had focused on quality standards interpretation and application. The following OECD/UNECE standards had been presented: Avocados, Pears, Cucumbers, Artichokes and Hazelnuts. In addition a number of presentations of general interest had also been made. Technical visits had been organized to orchards and packing stations and to a banana-ripening station. Forty-two delegates from 16 countries had attended the course, as well as 35 inspectors from the Slovak State Veterinary and Food Administration. The OECD and UNECE secretariats were also represented. The 10th International Training Course will be held from 12 to 14 September 2005. To express the close cooperation between UNECE and OECD on quality standards, the course may be held under the joint sponsorship of these two organizations.

Guildford: The Guildford Harmonisation Meeting had taken place in Guildford, United Kingdom, from 22 to 24 June 2004. It had discussed eight quality standards and their practical application, as well as mixtures of products, “prepared” products and risk assessment used at the import stage. A technical visit had been made to Heathrow airport. For information about the meeting, see the website at <http://www.defra.gov.uk/hort/hmi/ghm/GHM01.htm> The next such meeting would be held in 2006.

Bonn: The next “Geisenheim” meeting would be held in Bonn, Germany, from 28 February to 2 March 2005. Main topics would be the standards for avocados and kiwi fruit, as well as objective testing. Invitations were to be sent shortly.

Belgrade: The delegation of the United States provided information on a series of workshops on grade standards development that the United States Department of Agriculture and the US State Department would be holding in Belgrade from 15 to 19 November 2004. Subjects to be covered were fresh fruit and vegetables, meat and grain. The programme had started off as a market news programme but it was realized that grade standards were needed to report adequately about quality and prices. The presentations would cover grade standard setting in the United States, as well as international activities at Codex and UNECE, stressing the importance of UNECE standards for trade with countries of the European Union and Codex standards for food safety/hygiene issues. Mr. Corey Gilbert, a former delegate to the Specialized Section GE.11, would introduce UNECE standards for meat.

ITEM 11: Implementation/ evaluation of the work

INF.7

102. The secretariat presented an information document (INF.7) on the implementation of the agricultural quality standards that the UNECE secretariat had prepared for the budget process 2002-2003 and an estimate for implementation during 2004.

103. The same document also contains a draft questionnaire for a review of the work of the Working Party and its specialized sections.

104. The draft questionnaire had been sent to all participants for comments which were due by 15 December 2004. The results will be published as an addendum to the current report (see TRADE/WP.7/2004/10/Add.1).

ITEM 12: Programme of work

(a) Calendar of meetings

105. The Working Party took note of the provisional calendar of meetings of the Specialized Sections and the Working Party for 2005. Delegations were invited to inform the secretariat as soon as possible if any of the proposed dates were not convenient.

(b) Future work

106. The Working Party reviewed its programme of work (TRADE/WP.7/2004/9) and made some amendments. The updated version of the programme, as well as a draft agenda for the next meeting of the Working Party, will be published as addenda to the current report (TRADE/WP.7/2004/10/Add.2 and Add.3).

ITEM 13: Election of officers

107. The Working Party elected the following bureau:

Chair:	Mr. D.L. Priester (United States of America)
Vice-Chair:	Ms. V. Baricicova (Slovakia)
Vice-Chair:	Mr. C. Gaspar (Hungary)

ITEM 14: Adoption of the report

108. The Working Party adopted the report of its sixtieth session on the basis of a draft prepared by the secretariat.