Cross-border agri-food supply chains
Fruits and vegetables
The importance of standards and certification

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UNECE ≠ European Union

UNECE = UNITED NATIONS
Five Regional Commissions of the United Nations

UNECE is the only Regional Commission to develop agricultural quality standards

All UN Member states participate in the work
UNECE Agricultural Quality Standards

United Nations General Assembly

United Nations Economic and Social Council

United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (and all other Regional Commissions)

UNECE Steering Committee on Trade Capacity and Standards

UNECE Working Party of Agricultural Quality Standards (WP.7)

UNECE Specialized Sections

Fresh Fruit and vegetables
Dry and dried Produce
Seed potatoes
Meat
UNECE and Agricultural Quality Standards

Historical legacy - Period after World War II in UNECE region:
○ National quality standards regulated trade in agricultural products within each country’s national borders
Existing national regulations were often barriers to the growing international trade within Europe.

Against this background
1949 UNECE – Europe’s only functioning pan-European body – establishes Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards
○ To harmonize national standards into international standards
○ To provide a mechanism for their practical enforcement

UNECE is the only UN regional commission with a mandate in agricultural quality standards
Since 1954 UNECE standards follow a simple structure and set **uniform minimum** quality criteria, definitions and classifications and produce –specific tolerances. For example:

- **UNECE Standard Layout for Fresh Fruit and Vegetables**
- **Later: Standard format developed for meat as well as nuts and dried fruit standards:**

Definition of produce, **Quality requirements; Minimum requirements**, Classification (Extra, class I, class II), Sizing provisions, Tolerances (quality, size etc.), Presentation (uniformity, packaging), Marking
HOW WE DEVELOP STANDARDS:

Demand-driven, inclusive and open development and adoption process

○ All UN member countries participate with the same rights
○ Input comes from all parties involved (public and private; producing and importing countries) at all stages (development and evaluation before standards are adopted).
○ Cooperation with all other international organizations

Flexible, inter-active, responsive process (revisions when needed)

○ Standards are adapted to reflect emerging new varieties or changing producing, marketing, trading and regulatory conditions
○ Standards can be revised at any moment per request
○ Decisions are taken on a consensus basis
UNECE’s cooperation partners

- national, regional and international governmental organizations (such as OECD, Codex, FAO, UNDP, EU, WTO, ITC, UNCTAD) and NGOs
- professional organizations and the private sector

UNECE’s standards and guides go through an important trial phase and consultative process

Result:
- Including industry concerns helps develop standards that reflect trading practices, rather than normative ideals of what the product requirements should be.
- Increased use of standards by industry
Developing a standard

specialized Section and Working Party agree to create/revise a standard

Rapporteurs prepare/amend text

Specialized Section discusses text in detail

Working Party adopts the final text as a standard

Working Party adopts the proposed text for trial

Text for adoption or revision

unece Standard

unece Recommendation
trial period (1-2 years)
The Scope of UNECE standards

UNECE Standards have a simple structure (standard format) with produce specific tolerances and set uniform minimum quality criteria, definitions and classifications and produce –specific tolerances

PURPOSE:
define the quality requirements at the export-control stage, after preparation and packaging

SCOPE:
apply to produce intended for direct consumption or for food when intended to be mixed with other products for direct consumption without further processing.
Do no not apply to produce for industrial processing.
UNECE standards are voluntary marketing standards for international trade incorporated into national or regional legislation

- As export requirements to ensure that the produce have a certain quality level
- As a requirement for the domestic, export and import markets

incorporated into commercial contracts
Implementing UNECE Standards

UNECE STANDARD

Creating international best practice

GOVERNMENT
- National Standard

EU
- EU Regulation

FAO/WHO Codex Alimentarius
- Codex Standard

OECD
- Explanatory Brochures

PRIVATE SECTOR
- Reference in Contracts
UNECE standards - the legal context: EU level

UNECE Standards are enshrined in EU legislation
EU standards are fully harmonized with UNECE standards

For 10 products - compulsory product specific standards:
Apples, Citrus fruit, Kiwifruit, Lettuce, Peaches and Nectarines, Pears, Strawberries, Sweet peppers, Table grapes, Tomatoes

For other fruits and vegetables - General Marketing Standard
Four Specialized Sections:

- **Fresh Fruit and Vegetables** (56 standards; Lists of Varieties; Explanatory Guides for Sweet Peppers, Pineapples, Chilli Peppers, Persimmon)
- **Dry and Dried Produce** (28 standards; Guides for Walnuts and Dried Chilli Peppers; Colour Gauges)
- **Seed Potatoes** (1 standard; Guides to Seed Potato Field Inspection; Guide to Seed Potato Diseases, Pests and Defects)
- **Meat** (16 standards, plus 2 egg standards)
Priorities

• Working with the Specialized Sections of WP.7 towards the SDGs

• Goal 2. End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture

• Goal 12. Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns

• Goal 17. Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development
UNECE Standards for Fresh Fruit and Vegetables

Annonas  
Apples  
Apricots  
Artichokes  
Asparagus  
Aubergines  
Avocados  
Beans  
Berry fruits  
Broccoli  
Brussels sprouts  
Headed cabbages  
Carrots  
Cauliflowers  
Ceps  
Chanterelles  
Cherries  
Chicory (Witloof)

Chilli peppers  
Chinese cabbages  
Citrus fruit  
Courgettes  
Cucumbers  
Cucumbers  
Cultivated mushrooms  
Fennel  
Fresh figs  
Garlic  
Kiwifruit  
Lambs Lettuce  
Leafy vegetables  
Leeks  
Lettuce and endives  
Mangoes  
Melons  
Onions  
Peaches and nectarines  
Pears

Peas  
Persimmon (Kaki)  
Pineapples  
Plums  
Potatoes, early and ware  
Quince  
Ribbed celery  
Rhubarb  
Root and tubercle vegetables  
Shallots  
Strawberries  
Sweet chestnuts  
Sweet peppers  
Table grapes  
Table grapes (List of varieties)  
Tomatoes  
Truffles  
Watermelons
Explanatory guides

- interpret provisions of the standards
- provide guidance in related matters (disease guides, terms used, coding references)
- help with the grading of produce
- ensure uniform interpretation
- reduce risk of rejection
- help resolve disputes for producers, inspectors and traders
Trading fruits and vegetables: The importance of standards and certification

- Sustainability
- Food Loss
- Food Security
- Market Access
Food Security

World Food Summit 1996 - three pillars:
1. Food availability: sufficient quantities of food available on a consistent basis.
2. Food use: appropriate use based on knowledge of basic nutrition and care, as well as adequate water and sanitation
3. Food access: having sufficient resources to obtain appropriate foods for a nutritious diet.
Key message
To achieve food security - food has to be fit for human consumption and of appropriate quality.

- foods **conforms to national standards** of the recipient country and other internationally accepted standards.

- appropriate food packaging used

- Food is **labelled correctly**

- Food is **transported and stored in appropriate conditions after production and during sale**, using best practices in storage management, with systematic checks on food quality
Key message
To achieve food security - food has to be fit for human consumption and of appropriate quality.

Food quality: Food is labelled correctly
• To know what it is, where it comes from, how it can be traced back, what we are paying for, what it contains
Key message
To achieve food security - food has to be fit for human consumption and of appropriate quality.

- **Food quality:** Food is transported and stored in appropriate conditions after production and during sale, using best practices in storage management, with systematic checks on food quality.
Example
At production level
• Excellent quality
• Correct sorting
• Correct labelling
• Standards respected
Example after production and during sale,

- Minimum info for consumers
- No classification (price)
- Bad storage
- Rotten fruit on sale
- Quality is not checked

RESULT:
Quality and nutritious value have degraded
Key messages:
Food quality and food security

Where food security is threatened, it is necessary to work towards better quality and monitor it along the entire food chain.

Everyone involved with food - from farmer to consumer – has this responsibility.

Where food security is threatened food has to be fit for consumption and with the necessary nutrients to reduce health risks.

BTW: These actions will also prevent or reduce food losses, which is especially important in those situations.
Key messages:
Food quality and food loss are closely linked
Better quality reduces food loss further up the supply chain

Food loss occurs for many reason – UNECE look at the link between standards and technical specs and food loss all over the world (Kenya study; food loss conference and food loss discussion group)
Market access:
International best practice, standards, guides and training can help countries to:

• Keep existing markets
• Gain new markets
• Grow brands
• Stay competitive
• Differentiate in oversupplied markets
• Ensure consistent quality
• Establish trusted and sustainable trade relations
Market Access – EU Focus The EU28 is the world’s largest agri-food importer with a value of imports of €114 billion.

Graph 12: Composition of EU agri-food imports in 2015

Graph 14: Product categories with the largest absolute annual import value increase 2015
Market Access – EU Focus  The EU28 is the world’s largest agri-food importer with a value of imports of €114 billion.

(Graph 41: EU28 and Big5 imports from LDCs in 2015)

(Graph 42: EU agri-food imports from LDCs in 2015)

Sources: COMEXT & GTA
But a cross-border food supply chain is long
To be able to sell, buy or eat this fruit.....
production, sorting grading – quality and standards
production, sorting, grading – quality and standards
Export and standards
Arrival at destination, inspection (import), and standards
Key message
To achieve food security, limit food loss and ensure sustainability - food has to be fit for human consumption and of appropriate quality.

Food quality: food has to conform to food standards (national, international) with regard to quality, packaging, and labelling:
• Codex Alimentarius standards
• UNECE standards and best practice
Over the years UNECE has evolved into a platform for the development of agreed international best practice for international trade in agricultural produce.
Standards and related best practice facilitate trade and help open opportunities

What is needed?
• Comprehensive, balanced input from all regions to ensure that standards reflect actual market realities, include new production areas (their problems, their produce)
• Public-private sector cooperation (e.g. delegations)

What is at stake?
• Non-participation in the development of standards can have consequences (e.g. changes in tolerances can result in the declassification of produce, or loss in market shares)
• Standards need to be applied (uniformly) to make them work

Only cooperation can help develop comprehensive, inclusive global standards and assure their uniform application
UNECE’s approach:

**WIDER SCOPE**

UNECE is also a networking platform linking experts and expertise from different areas: trade facilitation; electronic business; risk management and risk assessment; environmental concerns; supply chain management; transport issues; promotion and capacity-building.

AIM: increase competitiveness, inclusive sustainable development, link issues and actors and create jobs.
Capacity-building and promotion

Over the past 8 years trained over 1600 participants

Cross-border agricultural food supply chains

• Present and promote UNECE standards and best practice: quality requirements to be met for export to major agricultural markets especially in UNECE region
• Explain how standards are applied in practice, how compliance is checked
• Explain the importance of quality and its control in an overall agricultural development agenda
• Involve and explain the role of the private sector
• Partner with other international organizations and donor agencies to maximize impact and pool resources
Help countries participate in agricultural food supply chains
What we do: Training, Education, Promotion

UNITED NATIONS ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

UNECE Dry and Dried Produce Standards in International Trade

From trees to your table

Behind the scenes – production, science and processing

19 June 2013
14:00
Salle VIII

Mr. Sam Keiper
Dried Fruit Association California, USA

Mr. Lothar Boers
Eurofins Laboratories, Germany

Food loss and ugly fruit
Dried Fruit and Nuts Expo
UNECE Commission
session
April 2015
What we do: Capacity-building, practical training, analysis

Turkey- Central Asia- Balkan

Sustainability Xchange

Business process analysis: export of dried apricot

Standards Map
Capacity-building and promotion
CHALLENGES

Today, the UNECE, national, regional, international regulators and the private sector have to take into account:

• New import and export markets

• More, and diverse players, more complex international supply chains and retailers that operate globally

• Concerns of consumers about the origin of their food, its safety and quality
Global nature of trade in fruit and vegetables require standards reflecting this

UNECE’s strengths

- simple structure of UNECE standards,
- open development and adoption process
- many years of experience (close to 30 standards)
- large pool of international experts (public and private sector)
- strong public and private sector support and use