

United Nations Conference on Trade and Development

International Workshop on

Fostering the Integration of Agricultural Value Chains of Commodity-Dependent Landlocked Developing Countries into Regional and Global Value Chains

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UNECE agricultural quality standards: unlocking trade potential

By

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The views expressed are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of UNCTAD.

Trading Food for Sustainable Development

UNECE agricultural quality standards:
unlocking trade potential



Kamola KHUSNUTDINOVA, Agricultural Quality Standards Unit



Outline



UNECE Agricultural Quality Standards: OVERVIEW

How UNECE Agri Quality Standards are developed: THE PROCESS

Why UNECE Agri Quality Standards matter: THE IMPACT

Possible actions: WAY FORWARD



UNECE Agricultural Quality Standards: OVERVIEW

THE PROCESS

THE IMPACT

WAY FORWARD

Who are we?



UNECE



United Nations Economic Commission for Europe

UNECE Economic Cooperation and Trade Division

UNECE Steering Committee on Trade Capacity and Standards

UNECE Agricultural Quality Standards

One of the central pillars of ECTD work along with Trade Facilitation & Electronic Business

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

Fresh Fruit &
Vegetables

Dry & Dried
Produce

Seed
Potatoes

Meat

UNECE at a glance



- The only UN Regional Commission with a mandate in developing agricultural quality standards
- Open for participation by all UN Member States

- Set up in 1947 by [ECOSOC](#)
- Aim is to promote pan-European economic integration through
 - Policy dialogue
 - **Normative work**
 - Technical cooperation
- **56 member States** in Europe, North America, the Caucasus, Central Asia and Western Asia
- 17 “programme” countries
- 18 landlocked and 2 double landlocked countries
- **More than 100 countries beyond the UNECE region benefit from its work**

UNECE's Agri Quality Framework



WHAT WE DO:

Define **minimum quality levels** that provide a common language to facilitate fair trade, prevent technical barriers to trade and increase transparency in the Markets

Contribute to:

- Facilitating trade
- Encouraging high-quality production
- **Improving profitability**
- Protecting consumer interests



UNECE Standards are used by:

- **Authorities** – check products against a set of transparent rules
- **Producers** – improve their production
- **Traders and Retail Chains** – order confidently, knowingly what they will receive
- **Consumers** – find quality produce in their markets

Our activities



Develop commercial quality standards for international trade and relevant explanatory material

18 standards adopted at the Working Party session in November 2021



Support SDG delivery, including on food loss/waste
Offer training and capacity building



Create lasting, sustainable impact and produce results via projects, partnerships and knowledge sharing

Our priorities and partners



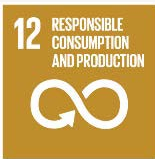
Delivering on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development



End hunger, achieve **food security** and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture



Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth through achieving **market transparency**



Ensure sustainable **consumption and production** patterns



Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the **global partnership** for sustainable development

Through continuous collaboration with

- 1000 plus experts
- UN regional commissions
- OECD, EU, FAO (Geneva, Budapest, Rome), FAO-WHO Codex Alimentarius Commission, ITC, UNCTAD, WCO, WTO
- UNDP (countries offices and Istanbul)
- Donor agencies (GIZ, Hilfswerk Austria)
- Universities
- Private sector

Our value added



- **Simple structure of UNECE standards**
- **Open development and adoption process**
- **Many years of experience and over 100 standards developed**
- **Large pool of international experts in public and private sector**
- **Strong public and private sector support and use**



- ✓ Encourage high-quality production
- ✓ Improve profitability
- ✓ Protect consumer interest

Four Specialized Sections:

- **Fresh Fruit and Vegetables** (56 standards; Lists of Varieties; Explanatory Guides for Sweet Peppers, Pineapples, Chili Peppers, Persimmon)
- **Dry and Dried Produce** (32 standards; 7 explanatory posters; Guides for Walnuts and Dried Chili Peppers; Color 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)



OVERVIEW

**How UNECE Agri Quality Standards are developed:
THE PROCESS**

THE IMPACT

WAY FORWARD

How we develop standards



Demand-driven, inclusive and open development and adoption process

- Standards are developed on request from countries – **any UN Member State**
- **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 varieties or changing producing, marketing, trading and regulatory conditions
- Decisions are taken on a **consensus basis**

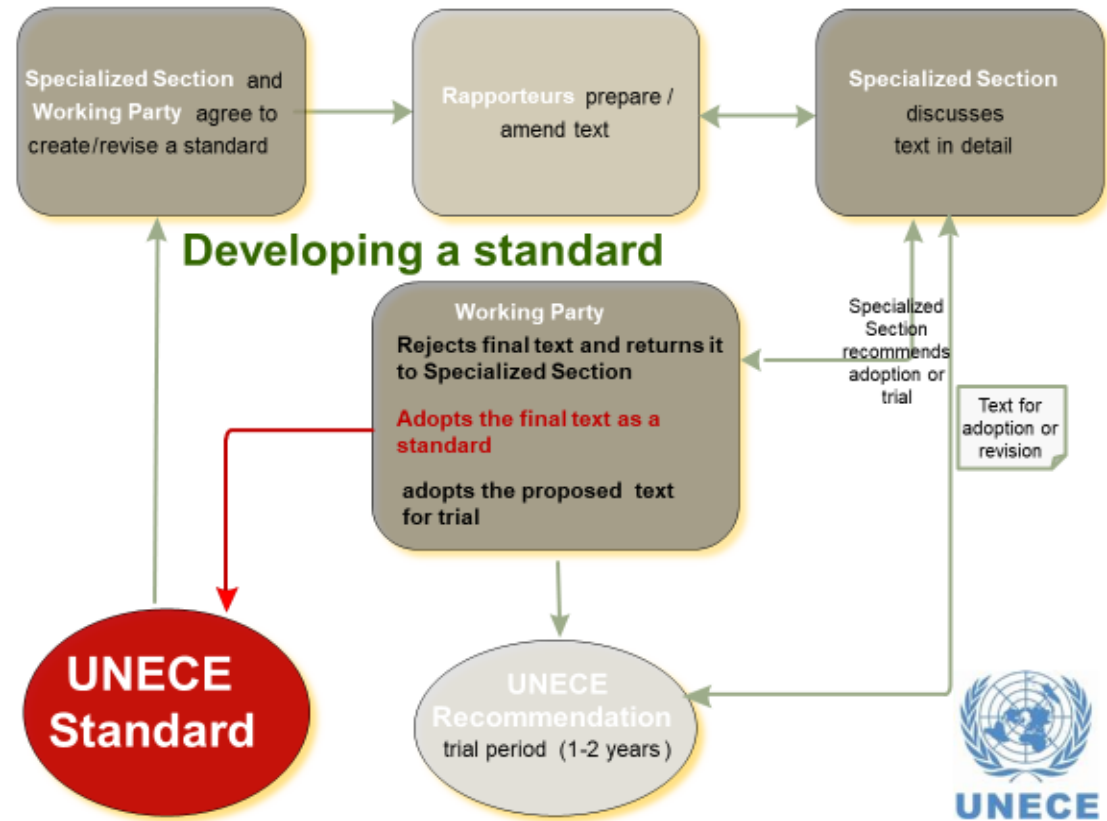
The development of a standard



Draft, negotiations, review, consultations, trial, review, consultations, approval, inter-sessional approval



ADOPTION by WP.7 (or veto and back to Specialized Section)



The Scope of UNECE Standards



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 not apply to produce for industrial processing.**

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



OVERVIEW

THE PROCESS

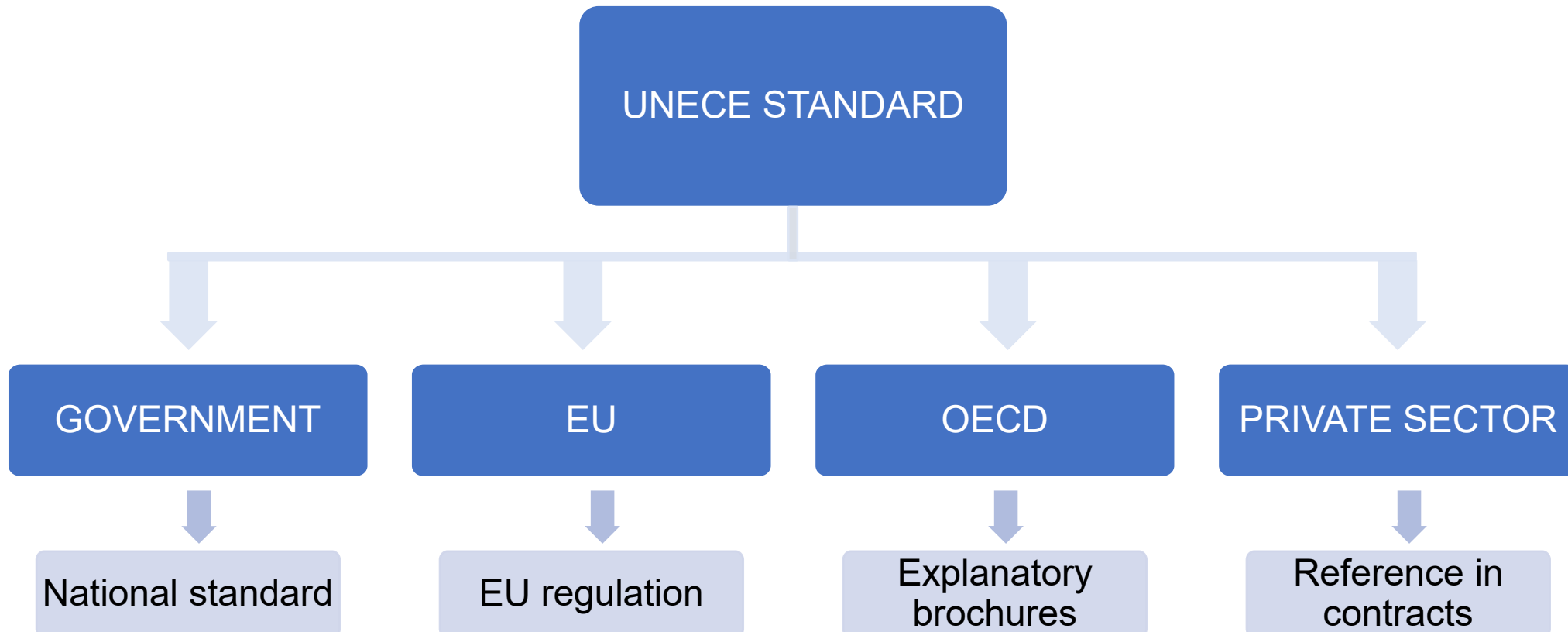
Why UNECE Agri Quality Standards matter: THE IMPACT

WAY FORWARD

UNECE Agri-Quality Standards: Role and Impact



From voluntary to binding
Implementing UNECE Standards



UNECE Agricultural Quality Standards - Impact



European Union (EU): Harmonizes its standards with UNECE standards for key agricultural products

Extra and intra EU trade:

- Uses UNECE standards for 10 most traded produce (=75% of all fresh fruit and vegetable (FFV) trade)
- References UNECE standards in the General Marketing Standards which covers all other FFV



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

Impact Example: Dried Apricots from Fergana Valley



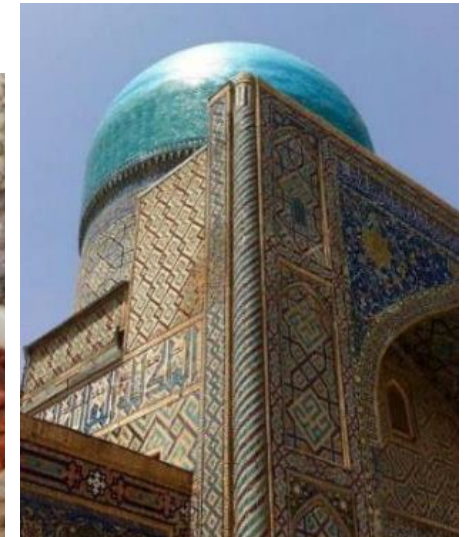
Since 2009 - UNECE Contribution:

- Revised UNECE quality standards were adopted as national standards
- Trained producers, packers, and inspectors of three neighbouring countries in Fergana valley to allow pooling of production
- Empowered and engaged with authorities, traders, and countries

Impact:

- Enhanced quality production for local markets & export
- Improved competitive position in international markets

- Benefits from inter-agency work at national levels and donor involvement



Impact Example: Uzbekistan since 2015)



Expansion, through UNECE agricultural quality standards:

- SMEs expanded, new ones were established and grew
- Result:
 - New sales contracts with local supermarkets
 - New export contracts to diversified destinations (including EU)
 - Expanded network opportunities throughout Central Asia



Sustainability:

- Offer of formal, sustainable employment (mostly women)
- Improved produce quality and longer shelf life
- Increased eligibility for funding and loans from international donors and development banks

Central Asia Working Group on Quality Standards (CAWG)



Central Asia Working Group (CAWG)

- Established in 2017 and financed by **Hilfswerk International** via **EU project**
- Includes: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan
- Supported by: **UNECE, UNDP, GIZ**
- Driven by the business community in the region & supported by government

Role of UNECE

- Facilitates compliance with UNECE standards to diversify exports and inclusion in regular standardization work
- Advises, supports work and organizes trainings
- Assists local producers

Example: CAWG meeting 2019 Tashkent, Uzbekistan

- Work on dried melons, persimmon, grapes, lemons, melons, onions, plums, prunes, dried apricot



Central Asia Inter-agency Impact Assessment 2015-2019 – Results



Increased sales opportunities

- Expanded destination markets & customers' network
- Entered new markets with improved product quality, leading to increased export volume
- In 2018, more than 200 tons of fresh plums were sold to EU countries and the Russian Federation

Increased productivity

- Increased adherence to international food quality requirements
- Improved productivity & acquired modern equipment
- More than 1,000 farmers certified according to the EU organic regulation and other organic standards

Improved produce quality

- Improved produce quality through the installation and use of new equipment
- Enhanced focus on food safety
- Introduced Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) principles for improved food safety of produce

Increased production

- One company alone: increased production to 1,000 tons of products per year, versus less than 500 tons five years ago
- Increased responsibility to customers throughout the production process
- Reduced level of defects (waste) in dried fruit production



Central Asia (Tashkent, Uzbekistan)

Fresh fruit and vegetables, nuts and dried fruit

2019 On-site Training - Tashkent, Uzbekistan





OVERVIEW

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Possible actions: WAY FORWARD

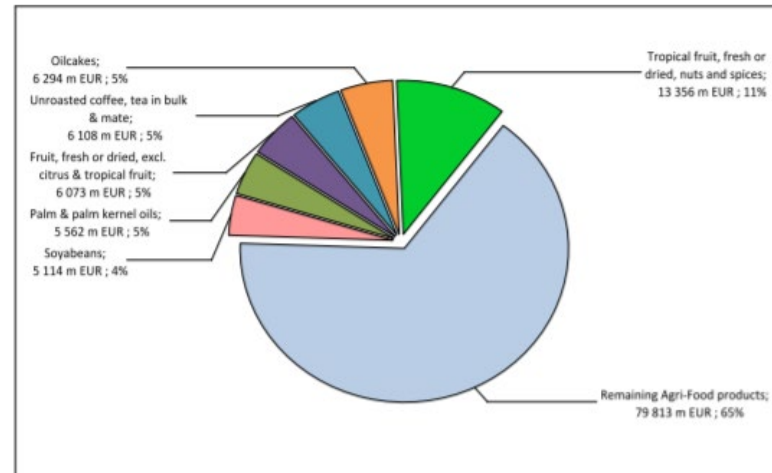
Potential Markets: European Union



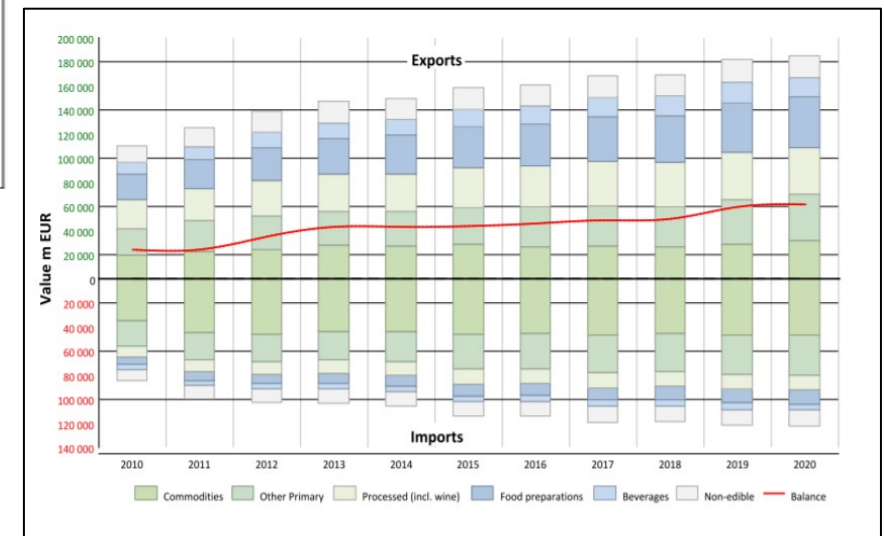
Key market for exporting countries around the world

- GDP: \$20 trillion USD
- Agrifood imports: more than EUR120 billion
- **Steady increase in imports, especially tropical and nontropical fresh or dried fruit, vegetables and nuts**
- **Tropical fresh or dried fruit, nuts and spices rank 1st place**

Top EU Agri-Food imports from Extra EU27 in 2020



EU Agri-Food trade with Extra EU27, 2010-2020



From Policy to Action



What can governments do?

- **Adopt and implement internationally accepted standards**
- **Participate in international standards-setting processes**
- **Establish conformity assessment and inspection infrastructure**
- **Mutual recognition of quality assessments and conformity certificates**

From Policy to Action



What can governments do?

Help with necessary legal and technical infrastructure to enable meeting private standards

Balancing public and private interests is important issue

Quality is based on trust and compliance – no matter where in the supply chain

UNECE Working Party 7: Inter-governmental meetings



UNECE

2021:

- 5 regular inter-gov. sessions held in hybrid mode & 10 online follow-up meetings

Results:

- 18 standards adopted (2 new +16 revisions)
- Revised draft guide on capacity-building
- Poster on the benefits of certified seed
- Sampling Plan for Tree Nuts and Dried Produce Guidelines for Inspections of DDP
- Revised Standard Layout for UNECE Standards for Fresh Fruit and Vegetables

41 Countries participated in the IG meetings course of the year: Australia, Austria, Belarus, Belgium, Brazil, China, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, India, Ireland, Italy, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Luxembourg, Morocco, Netherlands, New Zealand, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Russian Federation, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Tajikistan, Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Uzbekistan

2022 meetings planned:

- Specialized Section on Standardization of **Seed Potatoes** (GE.6) (17-18 March 2022)
- Specialized Section on Standardization of **Fresh Fruit and Vegetables** (GE.1) (16-18 May 2022)
- Specialized Section on Standardization of **Dry and Dried Produce** (GE.2) (15-17 June 2022)
- Specialized Section on Standardization of **Meat** (GE.11) (28-30 September 2022)
- Working Party on **Agricultural Quality Standards** (WP.7) (15-17 November 2022)

Future work



- Joint **OECD-UNECE Study** estimating the impact of marketing standards and explanatory brochures on trade in selected fruit and vegetables
- **E-learning course** on commercial quality standards to be launched in Q1 2022
- **Electronic Conformity certificate management system**, developed jointly with UNCTAD
- **Joint work with the WCO** on alignment of the UNECE cut codes with the Harmonized Commodity Descriptions and Coding System (HS codes)
- **UNECE Study** on Regulatory and Procedural Barriers to Trade in Uzbekistan to be presented in 2022

Stay tuned for the updates: <https://unece.org/trade/working-party-agricultural-quality-standards-wp7>

Thank you!

