

TRADE AND AGRICULTURE DIRECTORATE  
COMMITTEE FOR AGRICULTURE

**OECD Scheme for the Application of International Standards for Fruit and Vegetables -  
Meeting of Heads of National Inspection Services**

**DRAFT SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 14TH MEETING OF HEADS OF NATIONAL INSPECTION  
SERVICES**

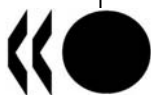
**Held in Helsinki, Finland  
2-4 June 2009**

*This draft report incorporates all comments received from the participants of the Meeting.*

*It is circulated to Delegations, National Designated Authorities and Observers for information at the 68th Session of the Plenary Meeting to be held in Paris on 9-11 December 2009 [under item 5 of the draft Agenda TAD/CA/FVS/A(2009)1].*

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**DRAFT SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 14th MEETING OF HEADS OF NATIONAL  
INSPECTION SERVICES**

**Helsinki, Finland, 2-4 June 2009**

**1. Opening and welcome address by Finland and the OECD Secretariat**

Mrs. Jaana Husu-Kallio, Director General of the Finnish Food Safety Authority (EVIRA) and Csaba Gaspar from the OECD Secretariat welcomed Delegates and opened the Meeting. The Meeting was chaired by Mr. Matti Puolimatka, Director, EVIRA.

**2. Adoption of the Agenda [TAD/CA/FVS/HS/A(2009)1/REV1]**

The agenda was adopted with some small changes to the time order and presentations. The Israeli presentation on harmonisation of inspection of quality parameters at point of export under Item 9 of the Draft Agenda was deleted and substituted by a presentation from South Africa on the same topic.

**3. Presentation on the OECD Fruit and Vegetables Scheme**

The OECD Secretariat gave an overview on the activities of the Fruit and Vegetables Scheme.

**4. Introduction of the Finnish Inspection Service**

Mrs. Beata Meinander informed the delegations on how the Finnish Food Safety Authority (EVIRA), and the fruit and vegetables quality inspection system are organized in Finland.

**SECTION 1.**

**POSSIBLE EFFECTS OF THE NEW EC RULES ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE OECD  
FRUIT AND VEGETABLES SCHEME**

**5. New rules of fruit and vegetables inspection in the European Union**

Mrs. Sandrine Valentin, representative of the European Commission, made a presentation on the new EU fruit and vegetables quality inspection system, which will be applied from 1 July 2009. One of the major changes will be the reduction of the number of specific standards from 36 to 10 and the introduction of a general marketing standard for fruit and vegetables, which are not covered by specific standards. However, the application of OECD/UNECE international standards will be equivalent with the general marketing standard.

The EU methods of inspection are based on the OECD operating rules for the conformity checks of fruit and vegetables products. The EU regulation also refers to OECD explanatory brochures and guidelines as reference materials for the inspection. The EU Certificate of Conformity was revised according to the OECD Model Conformity Certificate.

## **6. Implementation of the OECD Fruit and Vegetables Scheme in EC Member Countries in light of the new EC regulation**

### ***a) Presentation by Hungary***

Mr. Istvan Ecsedi, representative of Hungary made a presentation on the possible effects of the EU fruit and vegetables reform on the OECD Scheme. He outlined some of the advantages and disadvantages of the EU reform. From 1 July 2009 there will be quality requirements for almost all products, but not in a product specific way. The introduction of the EU general marketing standard seems to be a simplification, but its inspection in practice is not clear yet. Also, the number of regulations will be decreased but the specific characteristics of the product will not be taken into consideration. The EU also expects from the new rules that cheaper and aesthetically not perfect products will appear on the market. However the interpretation of aesthetical nonconformity is quite difficult and can lead to misunderstanding.

Mr. Ecsedi also gave an overview on the links and interactions between international standardisation bodies, such as OECD, UNECE and CODEX Committee. He mentioned that there is a lack of integration in the fruit and vegetables quality inspection. The quality has many elements as residues, marketing standards, heavy metals, residues, post harvest technologies etc. The OECD Scheme would be a good place to provide a framework for an integrated quality inspection system. It was also mentioned that it would be a good solution at international level if UNECE and CODEX standards were harmonised and inspected according to the OECD rules.

### ***b) Presentation by France***

Mrs. Marie-Isabelle Cremieux, representative of France, made a presentation on the application of commercial quality standards in France, focused on the organisation and implementation of fruit and vegetables quality inspection system in the country. She mentioned that from 1 July 2009 the national standards will be applied for only those products which are not covered by the new EU rules. It means that only the national standard on potatoes remains in force, the standards on pineapples, bananas and shallots will no longer be in force.

## **7. View of exporting countries on the new EC rules on the fruit and vegetables sector**

### ***a) Presentation by Turkey***

Mrs. Cigdem Kilickaya, representative of Turkey, gave an overview on the Turkish agricultural trade, the quality inspection system in Turkey, the status of the Turkey – EU harmonisation process and the possible effects of the implementation of the new EU rules on the Turkish inspection system. It was indicated that the application of the new EU rules may create ambiguity for all parties, especially for third countries. Therefore the role of the OECD/UNECE standards and the OECD explanatory brochures will increase in the future for the harmonised interpretation of the standards. She mentioned that the Turkish system is mostly harmonised with the EU system, therefore Turkey will continue the implementation of the current national quality inspection system. They will apply the Turkish national standards which are in line with the OECD/UNECE standards.

### ***b) Presentation by USA***

Mr. Dorian Lafond, representative of the USA gave a presentation on the US views of the new EU rules on fruit and vegetables sector. The US welcomes the simplification of trading rules. However some concerns were raised. The new rules may disrupt the transparency in the market and the comparability of prices on quality basis, for products not covered by specific marketing standards. It is not clear for producers and traders which quality criteria will be applied to the product along the marketing chain. Also,

there is potential for lower economic returns to producers and exporters due to the absence of quality classes or sizes in the general marketing standard. The use of general marketing standard without classes and sizes may hasten the development and application of private standards by importers and retailers at the disadvantage of the producers. The normative nature of the general standard may also lead to a subjective and very strict interpretation of quality requirements. There is also a lack of clarity on the relationship between the general marketing standard and the OECD/UNECE standards.

## **8. Roundtable discussion on the new EC rules**

Delegates discussed the conclusions of the presentations on the new EU rules. It was indicated that the introduction of the new EU inspection system will create a new situation in the international trade of fruit and vegetables. It was also mentioned that the role of the OECD/UNECE standards and the OECD explanatory materials will increase in the international trade, especially for products not covered by the EU specific marketing standard.

As the OECD Scheme plays an important role in the harmonization of fruit and vegetables quality inspection at international level, the new situation should be discussed at the 2009 Plenary Meeting. Member countries should send their view on the application of the EU rules, especially on the implementation of conformity checks on products graded according to the EU general marketing standard versus OECD/UNECE standards at export and import stage. The comments should be sent to the Secretariat in advance of the 2009 Plenary Meeting on this issue. The 2009 Plenary Meeting should discuss the possibility for harmonization of the inspection of general marketing standard and the OECD/UNECE standards between OECD Scheme's Member countries.

It was also mentioned that discussion should also be initiated on the possibility for the introduction of a framework for an integrated quality inspection system. A draft would be prepared by Hungary to initiate the process.

## **SECTION 2**

### **NEW CHALLENGES IN THE HORTICULTURAL SECTOR CONCERNING TRADE, QUALITY AND INSPECTION**

#### **9. Harmonisation of inspection of quality parameters at point of export**

##### ***a) Presentation by South Africa***

Mr. Mutengwe, representative of South Africa, gave an overview on the South African regulatory framework system, the harmonisation of fruit and vegetables export inspection, the formulation of export standards and colour charts and on the South African training programme for inspectors in order to ensure uniformity in the implementation of inspection.

##### ***b) Presentation by Kenya***

Mrs. Ntoyai, representative of Kenya was not able to make her presentation on the Kenyan export inspection system, because of her late arrival. However, her presentation was available on the USB key prepared by Finland. It will be also available in the Proceeding of the Meeting will be prepared by the OECD Secretariat.

**c) *The view of an importing country (UK)***

Mr. Ian Hewett, representative of the UK made a presentation on import inspection system in the United Kingdom and their experience on quality problems at point of import. It was mentioned that in 77 % of cases the labelling is the problem, and only 23 % of the quality problem, are due to packing defects, ageing etc..

**d) *Discussion***

During the discussion following the presentations, it was indicated that the valuable information received from the speakers would serve as an input for the OECD guidelines on inspection.

**10. Quality and Quality Inspection – The view of the Finnish Horticulture Trade**

Mr. Timo Taulavuori, managing director of the Helsinki Wholesale Market made a presentation on the status of standards and quality control systems in the Finnish market. He mentioned that the official, neutral quality control has declined in recent years. The wholesale chains are strong enough to define their own standards without consultation with producers. It was also mentioned that too many quality requirements are in the market, such as the official international and EU requirements, company's own quality management systems and private quality assurance systems. As a result of the recent quality management systems , it is a tendency for having only one quality level in the market and the extra and economical quality products are missing from the shelves.

**11. How to deal with products that are contaminated with soil and other materials**

**a) *Presentation by The Netherlands***

Mr. Jean Crombach, representative of the Netherland gave an overview on the structure and operation of the KCB, the Dutch quality inspection service. He introduced a possible model for harmonisation of inspection of soiled products. As a result, it was recognised that the assessment of consignments contaminated with soil has to be stricter. This quality problem should be detected and solved at the point of export, as rejection at import level means high cost to all participants. It is also necessary to define an acceptable limit for soiled products. The programme will be evaluated in the summer of 2009.

**b) *Discussion***

During the discussion it was indicated that international cooperation is necessary in the fruit and vegetables inspection. This is necessary for the harmonised application of the rules and standards and to have a common point of view on the inspection of specific quality parameters.

**SECTION 3**

**DEVELOPMENT OF NEW OECD TOOLS FOR INSPECTION AUTHORITIES**

**12. Sampling plan/ guidelines for inspection**

**a) *Presentation by Germany***

Mrs. Ulrike Bickelmann, delegate from Germany introduced a draft sampling plan which was discussed at the 2008 Plenary Meeting [TAD/CA/FVS/RD(2008)3]. It was mentioned that the sampling

provisions date back to a time when fresh fruit and vegetables have exclusively been packed in layers or in bulk in the package destined to be the transport package. Nowadays the products are presented in bulk bins or big bags. The application of the provisions of the current sampling plan results in a very big sample size. The same is true of products presented in open or closed sales packages packed in so-called transport packages. Therefore the OECD provision on sampling should be revised. It should be based on easy rules, respect the size of transport packages as well as the presentation in sales packages. It is also important that only a reasonably number of units should be checked taking into account the statistical security.

**b) Discussion**

It was indicated that the document on the German proposal [TAD/CA/FVS/RD(2008)3] to amend the OECD sampling plan should be circulated to delegates, as not everybody has access to OLIS. Delegates were also encouraged to send their comments on the German proposal to Germany by **15 August 2009**. It should be a Working Group meeting on Sampling, the day before the 2009 Plenary Meeting in order to prepare a final proposal on this issue for the Meeting.

**13. Developing distance learning tools**

**a) Presentation by the OECD Secretariat**

The OECD Secretariat presented the preliminary draft proposal for joint pilot project between the OECD and the FAO on development of distance learning tools. The discussion on this project begun at the 2008 Plenary Meeting as part of the Action Plan for the Reform of the Scheme adopted in 2004. The Secretariat was asked to examine the possibility to develop a common project on distance learning tools with FAO.

The pilot project would be on the development of e-learning materials on quality control rules. The distance learning package should be developed in a joint OECD/FAO programme. The OECD and the FAO should analyse the costs and benefits before the implementation of the pilot project. The OECD Fruit and vegetables Scheme should develop the Curriculum as a first step. The cost estimation should be done by the FAO based on the Curriculum.

The Curriculum should be developed by an OECD expert or working group. It would contain the outline of the final distance learning tool. The distance learning material should be based on the OECD rules and guidelines on inspection. The OECD Guidelines for Inspection, containing explanatory notes and illustrations to the rules, will be finalised in 2009. The OECD Scheme would explore the possibility to finance the project from voluntary contributions from its Member Countries and/or its regular budget. Other Organisations may be invited to contribute to the development of the distance learning materials.

**b) Brainstorming**

During the discussion it was indicated that the development of a distance learning tool is a good idea and it could be a powerful tool for the inspector's training in the government sector as well as in the private sector. However, the Scheme should wait until the Guidelines on Inspection are finalised. According to these Guidelines the Scheme would be in a position to prepare a proper Curriculum, which would give value to all stakeholders.

## **SECTION 4.**

### **THE FINNISH HORTICULTURE SECTOR**

#### **14. Description of the Finnish Horticulture Sector**

Mrs. Anna-Kaisa Jaakkonen, from the Information Centre of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry gave an overview on the operation of the Finnish Statistical Office (TIKE). She provided statistical information on Finland, the Finnish Horticulture, enterprises, production, self-sufficiency and gross return of the Finnish Horticulture Sector.

#### **15. The sector of natural products in Finland**

Mr. Simo Moisio, from the Arkiset Aromit Ry, made a presentation on the activities of the Arctic Flavour Association which was partly founded by the Ministry of Agriculture. The association helps companies with market information and with human resource issues and promote the forest berries, wild mushrooms and herbs. He also provided information on the value of the annual crops, domestic consumption and export of wild berries and mushrooms.

#### **16. Public access to the countryside: Everyman's right in Finland**

Mr. Mika Asikainen, from the Central Association for Recreational Sports and Outdoor Activities, introduced the Everymen's right in Finland. This is a basic right to roam freely in the countryside. It ensures a wide access to private land to everybody with the obligation to leave the environment undisturbed and preserve heritage. Over 20 laws regulate the everyman's right in Finland. This right may change in the future as there are same interest from land owners especially from foreign countries and vocal interest groups to change and reduce the everyman's right.

#### **17. The status of the wild blueberry in the world**

Ms. Riitta Ryyti, Food Safety and Quality Manager of the Kiantama Ltd. made a presentation on the harvesting and processing of wild berries. She also gave an overview of the export possibilities and future aspects of the processed wild berry products.

#### **18. Possible Future Work Projects**

The Meeting proposes the followings as future work project to the Scheme:

- The 2009 Plenary Meeting should discuss the possibility for harmonization of the inspection of EU general marketing standard and the OECD/UNECE standards between OECD Scheme's Member countries.
- A discussion should be also initiated on the possibility for introducing a framework for an integrated quality inspection system. A draft proposal would be prepared by Hungary for the 2009 Plenary Meeting.
- The information received on the harmonisation of inspection of quality parameters at point of export should serve as an input to the OECD guidelines on inspection.

- The German proposal to amend the OECD sampling plan [TAD/CA/FVS/RD(2008)3] should be circulated to delegates. They should send their comments to Germany by **15 August 2009**. A Working Group meeting on Sampling will be organised on the day prior to the 2009 Plenary Meeting in order to prepare a final proposal on this issue.
- The pilot project on the development of distance learning tools on quality inspection with the FAO should be postponed, until the OECD Guidelines on Inspection are finalised.

## **19. Other business**

The OECD Secretariat indicated that as a follow up to the Meeting, the Secretariat will prepare a Proceeding of the Meeting which will contain the agenda, the aim of each section all presentations and conclusion. The proceeding will be circulated to delegates in hard copy.

Delegates indicated, that as Hungary contributed significantly to the Meeting with many new ideas and proposals, it would be a good idea for Hungary to discuss the follow ups on these new items if they organised the next OECD Meeting of Heads of National Inspection Services in 2011. The delegate of Hungary informed the meeting that they have to check this possibility in Capital and will inform the delegates at the 2009 Plenary Meeting.



**ANNEX I.**

**List of Participants**

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