

UNECE work on Agricultural Quality Standards



High-Level Policy Dialogue on Trade Facilitation through International Standards and Mutual Recognition of Agricultural Machinery Testing, Bangkok, Thailand, 21 February 2023

**75 YEARS
OF ECONOMIC INTEGRATION
AND COOPERATION
IN THE REGION**

UNECE at a glance

Membership and focus

75



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- *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 Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards (WP.7)

Structure, focus and related work



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Organization:

- Working Party + 4 Specialized Sections
- 5 annual intergovernmental meetings
- Open to all UN member States
- Serviced by the Economic Cooperation and Trade Division (ECTD)

Over 100 commercial quality standards:

- Fresh fruit and vegetables, nuts and dried fruit, seed potatoes, meat, eggs
- Open development and adoption process, regular revisions, inputs from parties
- Complemented with guidance materials, illustrative posters and leaflets, code mark registry, etc.



Quality helps:

- Increase benefits from international trade
- Prevent food loss

Related work:

- Food loss and waste
- Capacity building
- Illustrated guides
- Studies

Used by:

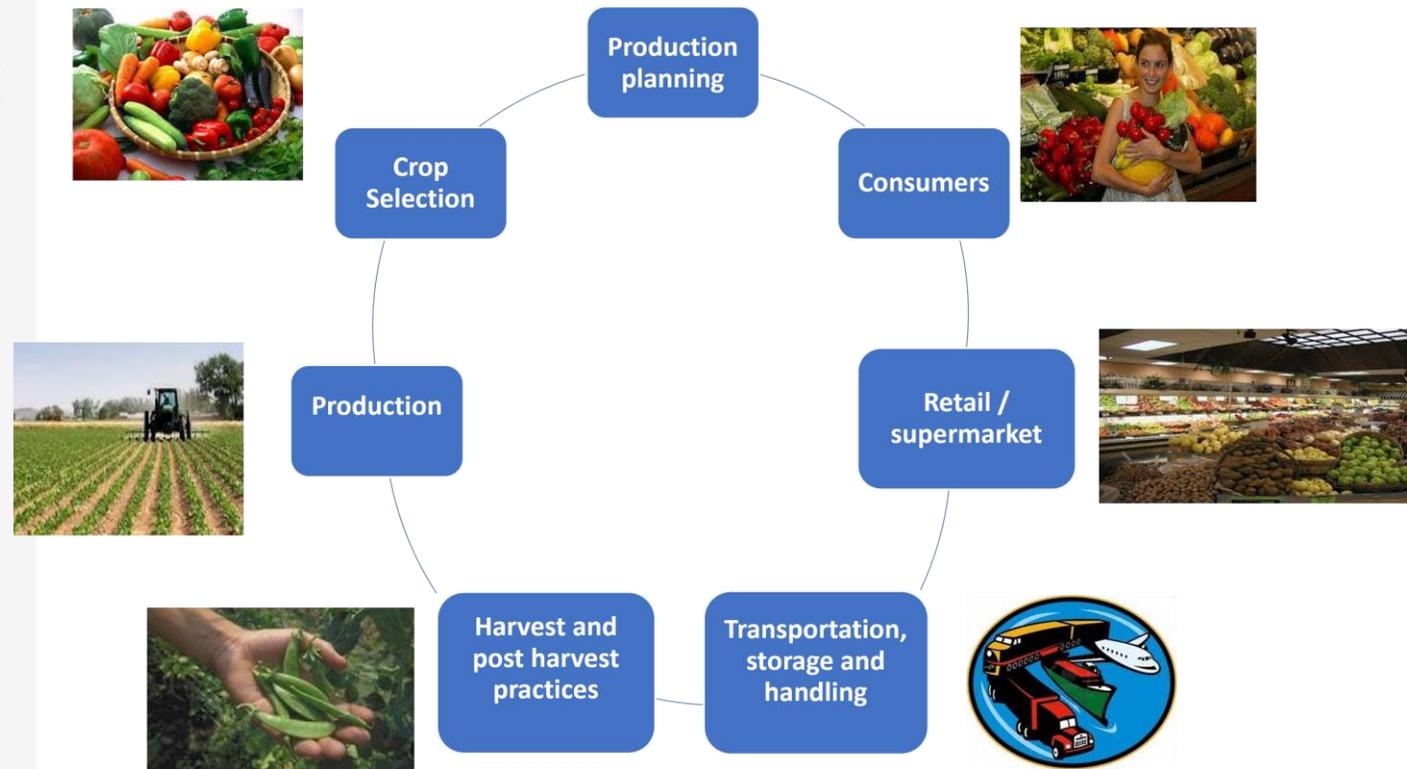
- Authorities – check products against a set of transparent rules
- Producers – improve production, reach new markets
- Traders & Retail Chains – order confidently

What are standards

Standards provide a “common trading language” used by industry to describe attributes of the commodity being sold.

They provide the terms of reference for ensuring the business transaction.

Quality at every stage



How agricultural quality standards facilitate trade



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- Provide a common trading/transaction language for all participating parties along the value/supply chain
- Define common minimum quality requirements, thus facilitating transactions
- Allow a transaction without prior visual inspection of the goods
- Help traders order with confidence, knowing they will get the quality of the produce they expect
- Serve as the basis for pricing
- Increases profitability of high-quality produce
- Build confidence and competitiveness on a market
- Prevent placement and sale of low-quality sub-standard products on a market
- Enables groups of producers to combine their produce to larger lots and better serve the market
- Support market development and market access
- Reduce food loss and waste

The scope of UNECE standards



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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.
- Does not apply to produce intended for industrial processing.

UNECE's standards and guides go through a 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

How are ECE standards developed?



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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, interactive, 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**

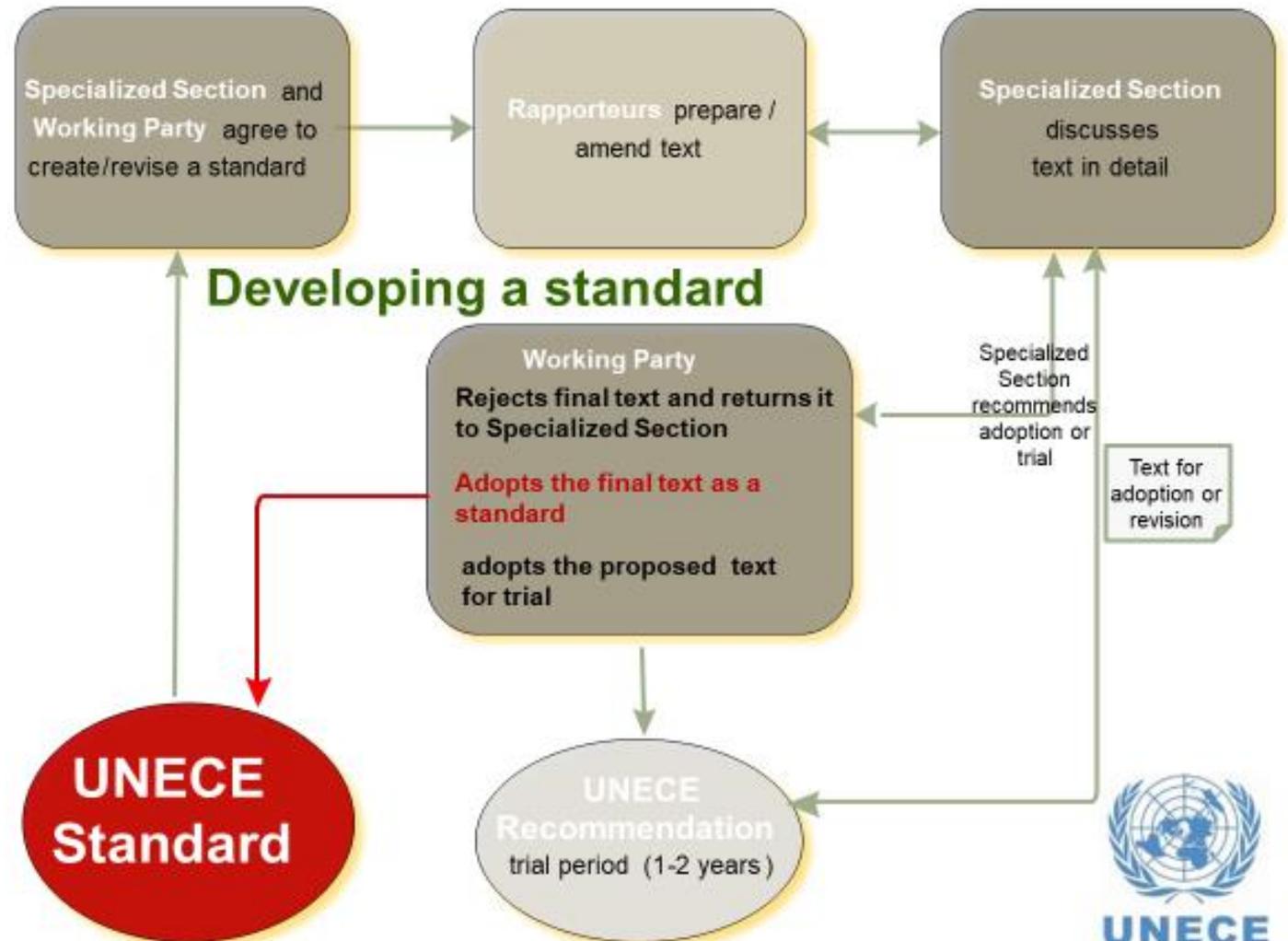
The development of a standard



Specialized sections develop a draft standard => recommend for adoption or trial => upon agreement to WP.7 for approval



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

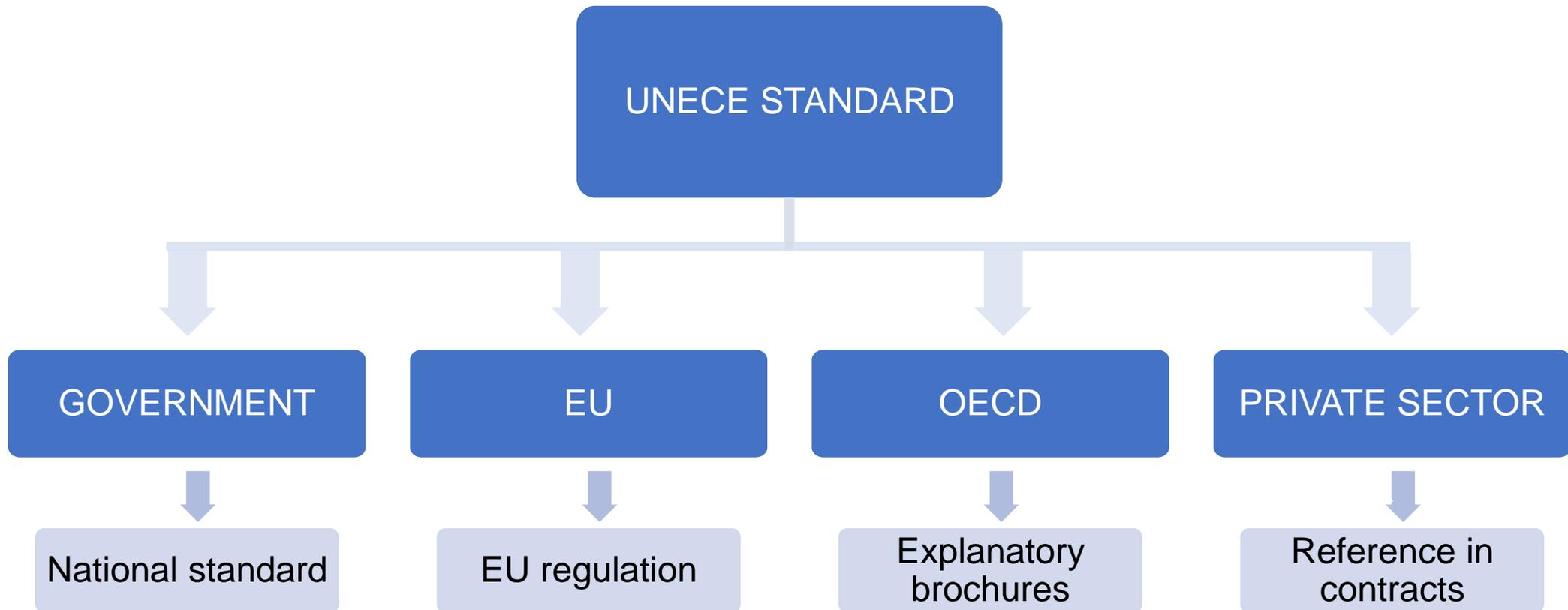


Role and impact of UNECE standards



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From voluntary to binding



Impact - example of the EU



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- UNECE Standards are enshrined in European Union (EU) legislation
- **EU harmonizes its standards with UNECE standards for key agricultural products**
- For 10 products – compulsory use of EU Specific Marketing Standards (fully harmonized with UNECE standards):
 - Apples, Citrus fruit, Kiwifruit, Lettuce, Peaches and Nectarines, Pears, Strawberries, Sweet peppers, Table grapes, Tomatoes.
- **For other fruits and vegetables, traders can either use the EU General Marketing Standard OR the equivalent UNECE standard**



Progress over the past 5 years

Adoption of UNECE standards and guidance



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	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Revised standards	Sweet peppers Dried bananas Goose meat Ovine meat Porcine meat	Annonas Avocado Berry fruit Broccoli Cauliflower Cherries Onions Root & Tubercle Veg. Table grapes Watermelon Inshell Walnuts	Headed cabbages Persimmons Sweet peppers Table grapes Updated lists of varieties (standards for Apples, Pears, Plums) Standard Layout for DDP	Apricots Carrots Cauliflower Chinese cabbage Cucumbers Fresh figs Strawberries Watermelons Dates (dried) Prunes (dried) Standard layout for FFV	Asparagus Cherries Leafy vegetables Pomegranates Standard layout for DDP
New standards		Dried melons Dehydrated coconut kernel pieces Dried ripe papayas	Minimum Quality Specifications for FFV	Sweet Apricot Kernels Pomegranates	Dried Persimmons Raw & Roasted Inshell Peanuts Raw & Roasted Peanut Kernels
Recommendations	Prunes Dried coconut kernel pieces Dried melons Dried papayas	Prunes (extension)	Sweet Apricot Kernels Inshell Pecans Pecan Kernels	Dried Persimmons Raw & Roasted Inshell Peanuts Raw & Roasted Peanut Kernels Inshell Pecans (extension) Pecan Kernels (extension)	Certain small fruits Inshell Pecans (extension) Pecan Kernels (extension)

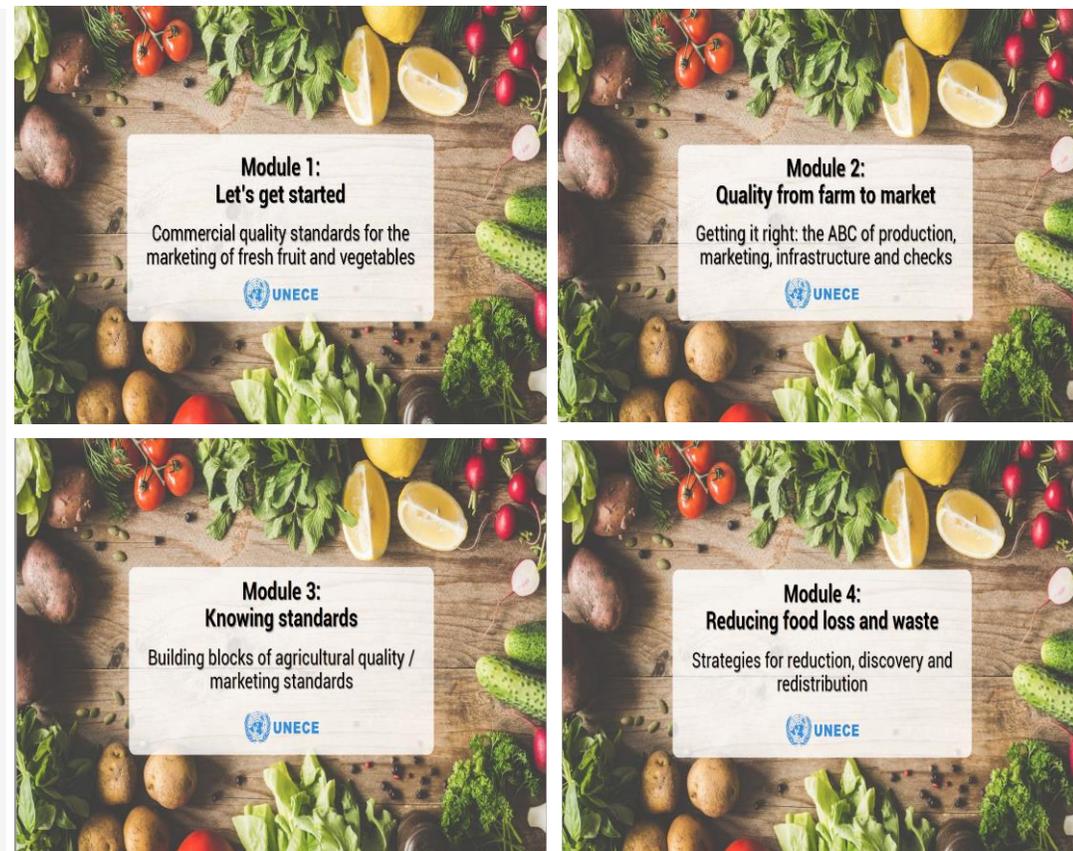
Related work

Capacity building, analysis, e-quality



WP.7 related:

- Online course on agricultural quality standards and food loss: <https://unece.org/trade/wp7/e-learning>
- [Code of Good Practice](#) – reducing food loss and ensuring optimum handling of fresh fruit and vegetables along the value chain
- OECD/ECE [study](#) on the impact of agricultural quality standards on the trade of fruit and vegetables
- [eQuality](#): development of a functional specification for electronic conformity certificate management system
- UNDA project: Regional policy paper on food loss and waste, and support to the Government of Serbia in developing a roadmap on food loss and waste mgm.



Upcoming work

Specialized Sections on Standardization of FFV and DDP



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Specialized Section on Standardization of **Fresh Fruit and Vegetables (FFV)**:

- Certain Small Fruits (review of recommendation)
- Sweet potatoes (development of a standard)
- Peas, asparagus, broccoli and kiwi revisions
- Food loss and waste - review of standard layout and 2-3 standards (ongoing)
- HS code discussion

Specialized Section on Standardization of **Dry and Dried Produce (DDP)**:

- Inshell pecans (review of recommendation)
- Pecan kernels (review of recommendation)
- Cashew nuts
- Explanatory posters
- Capacity building
- Development of a Code of Good Practice for DDP
- ECE/OECD study on impact of DDP standards on trade

Thank you!



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UNECE

21 February 2023

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