

THE UNECE TO PROVIDE A NEW PEST AND DISEASE GUIDE.

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The “Specialized Section on Standardization of Seed Potatoes” of the Economic Commission for Europe, (UNECE) held its 41st session in Geneva, March 11-13 March 2013. Seed certification officials of Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Italy, Netherlands, Russian Federation, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and United States of America attended the meeting as well as a representative of the European Union. The funding for the certification official from the US is from the US Potato Board on request from the Seed Certification and Disease Management Sub-Committee of the National Potato Council. At the beginning of the meeting the division director said that over the past several years the Specialized Section had made very good progress on developing the UNECE Standard for Seed Potatoes. This international recommendation on the commercial quality of seed potatoes was meant to prevent technical barriers to trade in this very important product. The UNECE Standard provided a useful framework for the international movement of clean planting material. That, in turn, contributed to food security and higher income for farmers. Many countries used the UNECE recommendation as a basis for their national standards. For example, in the Russian Federation the new national standards were based on the UNECE one. In addition, the UNECE Standard had also been introduced as the reference for use within the Russian voluntary system of seed potato certification.

The legal background of the UNECE trade standards were discussed and it had been agreed that “The standards should not be revised earlier than three years after the latest revision unless there is an urgent and well-substantiated need to do so.”

Definitions: After several meetings of the extended bureau results had been submitted to the full section in Geneva such as (i) definitions of clonal selection, clonal stock, micropropagative multiplication, parent material, wet and dry rots; (ii) tolerances for dry and wet rot for Basic and Certified seed in section A.2. of annex III. Also the definition for “external defects” was accepted as: “Any tuber defect which can be detected externally. Countable tubers are those which may have a negative impact on yielding capacity or storability, or which is likely to lead to secondary infection.” There was a change in approach and more appearance related defects had been introduced. A working group was to look at shriveled and misshapen tubers, severe cracks, pressure bruises and glassiness .

The definition for seed potatoes is now: “Produce is seed potatoes. Seed potatoes are tubers (including minitubers) and potato micropropagative material of cultivated tuber-forming *Solanum* spp. for planting (reference to ISPM 33, 2010) and which are certified by the DA as meeting the specified requirements of this Standard, with the exception of trials or scientific purposes and selection work.

A reaffirmation for the acceptance of varieties was noted as “Varieties shall be accepted for certification under the Standard if an official description and a reference sample can be made

available to the DA.” The US is still the only country that has varieties in the certification programs that do not fulfill this.

A paragraph has been added enhancing the scope of tuber inspections. Details can be found at the UNECE seed potato website: http://www.unece.org/trade/agr/standard/potatoes/pot_e.html

UNECE Seed Potato Disease and Pest Guide: A tremendous effort had been done by Scotland in developing a “disease and pest guide for seed potatoes”, including photos from the website. This booklet will be translated in Russian and French and will be made available. Officials of France, Netherlands, United Kingdom (rapporteur), Russian Federation, United States and the secretariat were asked to continue to work on the Guide in order to prepare it for further at the meeting in Fargo in October.

Demonstrations. A guideline is developed for demonstrations and training of inspectors.

Certification of cut seed tubers: The certification official from the United States made a proposal on how to treat cutting tubers within the certification scheme of the UNECE Standard. The Specialized Section agreed on a common position on this issue that can be found at the UNECE seed potato website.

Mild and severe virus symptoms. The United States was asked to lead a discussion in Fargo on how mild and severe virus symptoms could be better reflected in the Standard considering the mild symptom expression in combinations of varieties and strains of PVY. One of the approaches could be to include “any symptoms caused by PVY” in the severe virus tolerance.

Potato flea beetle is becoming a quarantine pest in Europe and the UNECE Standard may have to reflect that by having a zero tolerance for the insect, but not for the symptoms.

The representative of the Russian Federation informed the delegations about the use of the UNECE Standard in his country and thanked the Specialized Section’s experts for the provided technical assistance. He invited the delegations to the Workshop on healthy source seed potato production to be held in Vladikavkaz, Northern Ossetia on 23 and 24 July 2013.

A meeting of the Extended Bureau will be held from 30 September to 2 October in the United States of America. It will be hosted by the North Dakota State Seed Department in Fargo, ND. Visitors may want to arrive on 28 September, if they are interested in a tour on Sunday, 29 September. The agenda of that meeting will include the UNECE Guide on Seed Potato Diseases, Pests and Disorders (United Kingdom); External defects including sprouted tubers (Belgium); Tuber moth and flea beetle (Belgium); Tolerances for mild and severe virus symptoms (United States); Cooperation between UNECE and IPPC (New Zealand); Revision of the Specialized Section’s position papers as they are on the web on PVY, blackleg, silver scurf, vigor and cut seed tubers; Definition of tolerances by weight or by number (Sweden); Impact of the revision of the EU Directive 2002/56/EC on the UNECE Standard; Update on PVY, Dickeya, Zebra chip and other topics of interest.

The Specialized Section re-elected Mr. Pier Giacomo Bianchi (Italy) as its Chair and Mr. Willem Schrage (United States) and Mr. John Kerr (United Kingdom) as its vice-chairs.

(W. Schrage, North Dakota State Seed Department; Valley Potato Grower, April 2013, page 12-13)