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Improving Quality – reducing barriers What can be done? – Lessons learnt from other regions



Regional Commissions of the United Nations

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UNECE - only Regional Commission developing quality standards

All UN Member states participate in the work

Introduction UNECE and Quality

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**Why can quality be a way to reduce
barriers to trade?**



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In UNECE region, impact of food quality on trade and economic development was fully recognized after WWII



Result: Development of an internationally agreed uniform framework (standard format) defining quality criteria

- Internal: smell, maturity, etc.
- External: cleanliness, color, freshness, shape, presentation, etc.

WHY?

- **define the quality requirements at the all marketing stages make it easier to trade and rely on common terms, improve cross- border cooperation**

Ensure transparency in trade and good, nutritious eating quality



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Examples:

Spanish citrus fruit success story – since 1934

- **Recognizing quality** as a:
 - Marketing tool
 - Codified trade language
- **Building export industries** around:
 - Controlled & consistent good quality
 - Excellent reputation
- **Defining quality** according to set requirements & systematic checks



UNECE's Agri Quality Framework

UNECE

**Quality for trade since
1949**

**Working Party on
Agricultural Quality
Standards**

**Fresh fruit and
vegetables, nuts, dried
fruit, meat, eggs, seed
potatoes**

- **Over 100 voluntary marketing/quality standards and 800 experts**
- **Minimum Quality Standard for developing domestic markets**
- **Code of good practice to avoid food loss**
- **Many governments introduced quality standards for domestic markets as well as import and export**

UNECE's Agri Quality Framework

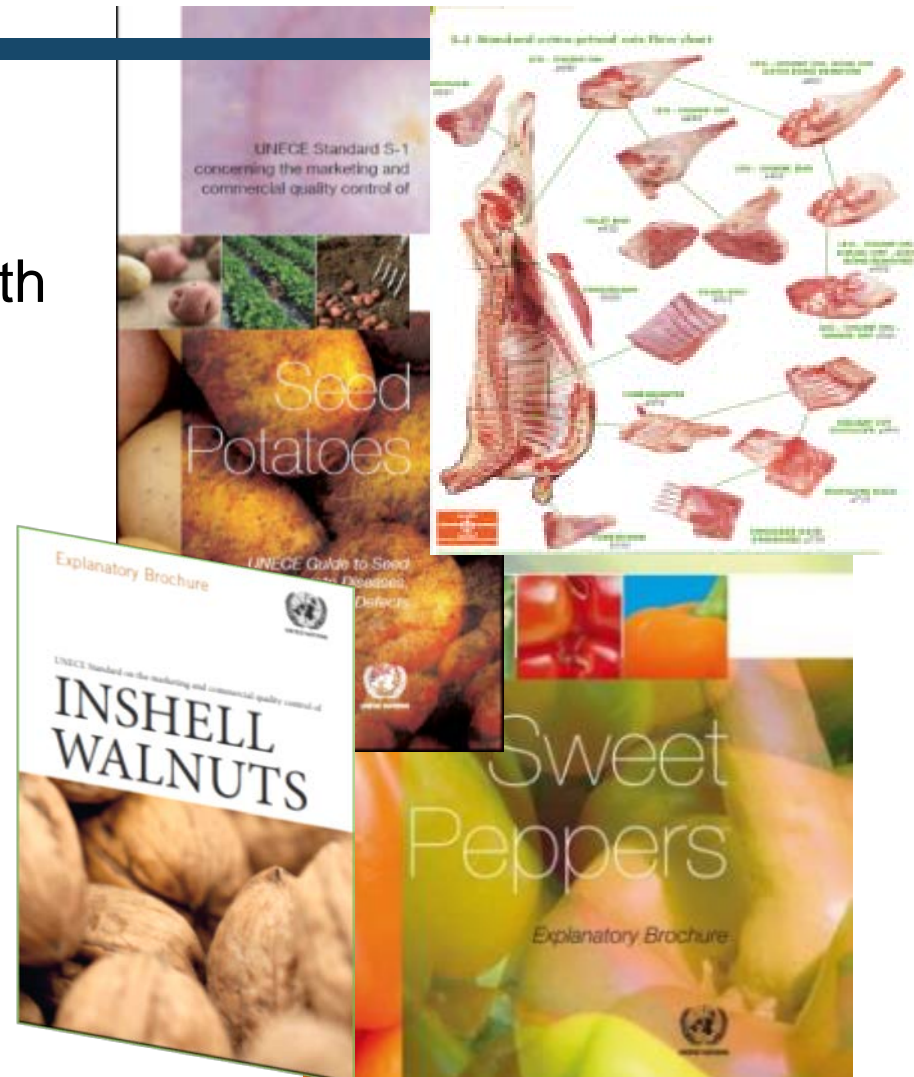
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Explanatory guides and Apps

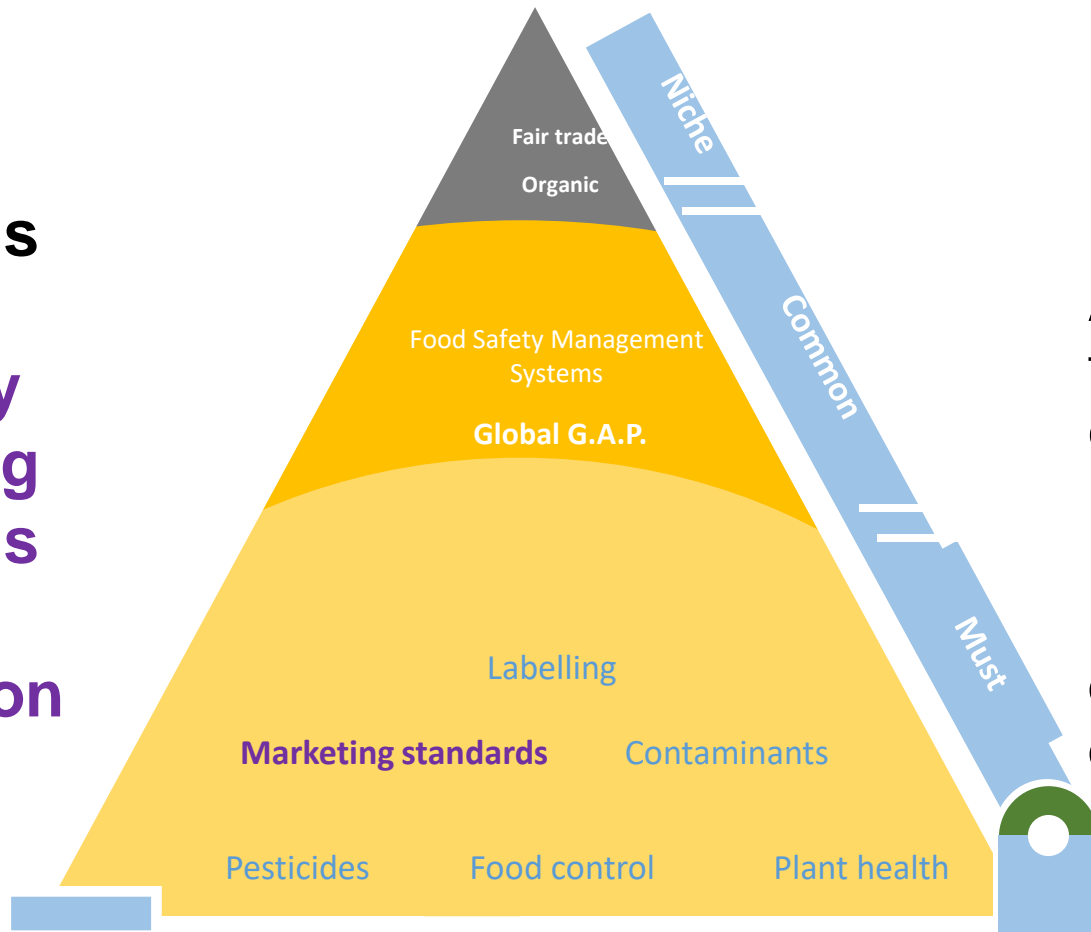
- interpret the standards, help with the grading of produce, ensure uniform interpretation
- reduce risk of rejection, help
- resolve disputes,
- provide guidance (disease guides, terms used, coding references)

for producers, traders, buyers, inspectors



Food standard Requirements and Marketing standards

UNECE standards are voluntary marketing standards for international trade



Incorporated into national or regional legislation

As a requirement for the domestic, export and import markets

Incorporated into commercial contracts

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UNECE - Sustainable agriculture, safe food and good quality.

- 1. No food quality without food safety**
- 2. Food safety & food quality are complementary**

Quality is food safety plus more

Quality is important for trade, business and consumers, sustainable trade, less food loss, market access, food security



What is Quality

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Quality has several definitions but is perceived differently by different actors of the supply chain.

- **Producers:** expect high yields, resistance to diseases, good appearance, ease of harvest, good storability or and the ability to withstand long-distance shipping to markets.
- **Wholesalers and retailers:** appearance, firmness, and long shelf-life.
- **Nutritionists** judge food by their nutritional and health properties.
- **Consumers:** appearance (including ‘freshness’) at the time of purchase.



What is Quality



How to handle the fruit to prevent product losses at the POS



Wrong: Fruit bruised by knocking, rubbing and pressing at the POS

How to handle the fruit to prevent product losses at the POS



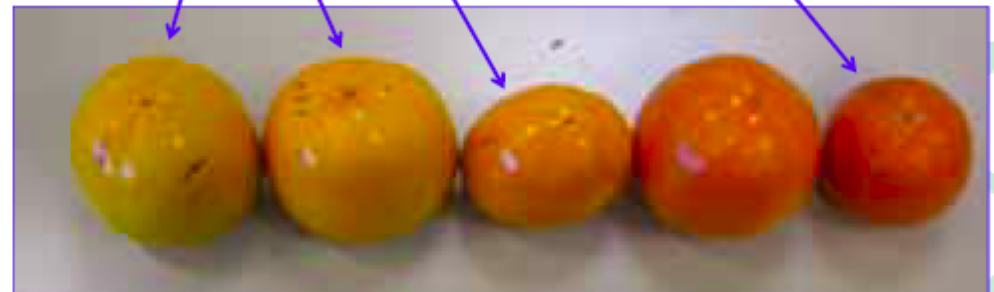
Wrong: Persimmon is displayed layer-on-layer. Fruit damages and first signs of internal discoloration are visible.

Harvest Period

Late September / Early October

November

Until mid-late December



Seasonal Color Evolution



What is Quality

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The term “quality” can be used in combination with various other various ways in reference to fresh fruits and vegetables such as

- “market quality”,
- “edible quality”,
- “dessert quality”,
- “shipping quality”,
- “table quality”,
- “internal or external quality”.
- **“nutritional quality”.**





Quality is always a mix of several major factors:

- Appearance (size, shape, colour, gloss, no defects and decay),
- Texture (firmness, crispness, juiciness, toughness, fibrousness),
- Flavour (sweet taste, sour taste, bitterness, astringency, aroma, off flavour / off aroma),
- **Nutritional/health values (minerals, vitamins, carbohydrates, proteins, antioxidants, fibre)**
- **Safety (contaminants (residues of pesticides, heavy metals), mycotoxins,**
- **microbiological contamination, natural toxic substances, allergens).**



In food quality there are two major distinctions possible:

- Attributes which affect sensory characteristics of food (typically 'visual' and related to taste) and
- **'internal' or 'hidden' attributes which affect nutritional and/or the health value of the food.**

OBJECTIVELY MEASURING QUALITY IS Difficult



What is Quality

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CRITICAL:

- **Fruit and vegetable lose their quality attributes: Decomposition starts already shortly after harvest and continues until consumption.**
- **Chemical, enzymatic and microbiological processes responsible for this decomposition have different dynamics**
- **Vitamins, minerals, micronutrients disappear.**

The loss in nutritional values happens long before external appearance is affected (discoloration, decrease of firmness etc.) or decay appears.

In practice –quality framework and standards in action



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Example: at production level - **Excellent quality**



In practice –quality framework and standards in action



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At retail stage:

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

Quality and nutritious value have degraded



In practice – UNECE quality framework and standards in action: Domestic markets and using standards

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“Poor” versus “good” marketing quality



Food has to be fit for human consumption and of appropriate quality



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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



Lesson learnt from UNECE region



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Knowing and being able to trade safe and quality food, being able to inspect and market it cross-border at determined terms

- **helps improve cross-border trade movements**
- **builds trust among traders and ultimately among countries**
- **reduces food loss**
- **improves situation in a resources constraint context.**

Example - Quality to improve cross-border cooperation



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Example: Dried apricots in Central Asia

- Engaging in UNECE standard-setting work
 - Adopting quality standard as national standard
 - Training producers, packers and inspectors
 - Pooling production
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- Equal footing with large producers and importers
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- Quality production for local markets & exports
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- Improving competitive position in international markets



Thank you



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<http://www.unece.org/trade/agr/welcome.html>

