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INFORMATION MEMO

Application of quality standards to fruit
and vegetables on national markets

The Commission has laid before the Council a proposed regulation for the application of quality standards to home-grown fruit and vegetables marketed in the six Community countries.

One of the stipulations in this proposal is that the produce may only be transported or marketed in the country in which it has been grown if it complies with common quality, size and packaging standards. This rule is to be applied to a first group of products (cauliflowers, tomatoes, apples and peaches) from April 1, 1965 onwards, and to a second group (including citrus fruit and dessert grapes) from April 1, 1966 onwards.

This regulation will therefore be complementary to the two decisions already in force, which lay down procedure for the enforcement of quality standards in intra-Community trade and trade with non-member countries.

It would hardly be feasible to apply in the immediate future the quality standards now in force in intra-Community trade to home-grown produce marketed within each producing Member State without certain adjustments to the standards, one of which is the establishment of supplementary quality grades which, in normal circumstances, would enable unsatisfactory produce to be kept off the market.

The Member States will not however be able to adopt supplementary quality grades for an indefinite period but only until December 31, 1967. The basic regulation (No. 23) will be amended to this effect.

Until this date each Member State will be able to influence supply from the production stage by prohibiting, where crops have yielded a surplus, the transport and marketing of a part of the produce covered by the standards. When crops have fallen short of requirements, whether in quality or in quantity, appropriate measures will also be allowed, in order to cope with the abnormal state of the market - either by suspending the quality standards for a specific period or by provisionally adopting supplementary criteria of quality and size.

The particulars provided for in regulations on quality standards must all be given in one place on the package. Bulk consignments must be accompanied by a document supplying this information.

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The quality standards apply as far as the retail stage so that² consumers may enjoy the benefit of standardization and make their purchases from properly sorted and clearly marked produce.

Produce for processing and produce delivered directly by the producer to packaging centres is not required to comply with the standards.

Control will be by the spot-check or sampling method. Where batches checked do not satisfy requirements, the inspectors will order repackaging or down-grading. In cases of serious infringements of the rules a fine of not less than 20 units of account (= dollars) may be imposed.

The regulations will apply by analogy to fruit and vegetables imported into a Member State.

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The provisions already in force on the standardization of fruit and vegetables have been published in the following issues of the official gazette of the European Communities:

- 5th year, No. 30: the basic regulation (No. 23) and standards for cauliflowers, tomatoes, apples, pears, peaches, lettuce, endives (curly green) and batavia (escarole), onions, apricots and plums;
- 5th year, No. 56: standards for spinach, chicory (white), peas, beans, carrots, artichokes, dessert grapes, cherries and strawberries;
- 5th year, No. 63: standards for citrus fruits;
- 5th year, No. 59: application of the standards to intra-Community trade;
- 6th year, No. 121: application of the standards to imports from non-member countries.