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**To all interested parties**

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**PROPOSAL FOR A COUNCIL DECISION ON THE EQUIVALENCE OF FIELD INSPECTIONS CARRIED OUT IN THIRD COUNTRIES ON SEED PRODUCING CROPS AND ON THE EQUIVALENCE OF SEED PRODUCED IN THIRD COUNTRIES**

I am writing to consult you about an EU Commission proposal for a Council Decision on the equivalence of field inspections carried out in third countries on seed producing crops and on the equivalence of seed produced in third countries. A copy of this proposal is enclosed in document COM (2002) 576 final.

**Background**

- The Seeds Marketing Directives provide for the Council of Ministers to determine whether field inspections in third countries and seed harvested in third countries are equivalent to those in the Community.
- In 1995, Council Decision 95/514/EC established the conditions under which seed of agricultural plant species might be imported into the Community. This Decision (as extended by Decision 2000/326/EC) will expire on 31 December 2002.
- The EU Commission has recently made a proposal to renew the arrangements for seed equivalence with third countries to take effect from 1 January 2003.

**Commission proposal**

**The main elements of the Commission's proposal are to:**

- Renew equivalence until 31 December 2007 for twenty countries to which reference is made in Decision 95/514/EC (other than Switzerland which has been covered since 1 June 2002 by a separate agreement). In addition, the Commission has proposed the inclusion of Estonia, Latvia and Yugoslavia following requests from these countries to be included in the seeds equivalence arrangements. The third countries, their authorities and the relevant species (by reference to the Seeds Directives) are shown in Annex I of the proposed Decision.
- Re-establish the conditions which field inspections in third countries must satisfy – see Annex II A.



- Re-establish the conditions which seeds produced in third countries must satisfy - see Annex II B. These include labelling requirements. The particular requirements for the labelling of seed of varieties that have been genetically modified remain unchanged – see Annex II B 3.2.
- Set requirements for the re-labelling and re-closing of packages of seeds.
- Allow amendments to the Annexes, except for the list of third countries, to be made by the Standing Committee on Seeds and Propagating Material for Agriculture, Horticulture and Forestry.

The proposed Decision would apply from 1 January 2003 until 31 December 2007.

### **Your comments**

The Danish Presidency of the Council of Ministers has scheduled a Council Working Group to discuss this proposal on 22 November 2002. This means that there is a much shorter period than would be available normally to seek your comments. If you wish to comment on the Commission's proposals, would you please do so in writing, by fax or by e-mail, to Ms Carol Scott at the following address by no later than **20 November 2002**.

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In order to help inform debate on the questions covered by this consultation letter, the Department intends to follow its normal practice of making available to the public, on request, copies of the responses received. The Department will assume, therefore, that responses can be made publicly available in this way. If respondents indicate that they wish all, or part, of their reply excluded from this arrangement, **its confidentiality will be strictly respected**.

Copies of the responses made available to the public will be held on an "open file" held in the Library at Saughton House, Edinburgh. Copies of documents from the "open file" will be forwarded to members of the public on request. A charge will normally be levied to cover the cost of copying.

**Yours sincerely**

**Mr B A Cockwell**  
 Plants, Horticulture and Potatoes



COMMISSION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES

Brussels, 23.10.2002  
COM(2002) 576 final

Proposal for a

**COUNCIL DECISION**

**on the equivalence of field inspections carried out in third countries on seed producing crops and on the equivalence of seed produced in third countries**

(presented by the Commission)

## **EXPLANATORY NOTE**

Council Directives 66/401/EEC, 66/402/EEC, 2002/54/EC and 2002/57/EC on the marketing of seed (fodder plants, cereals, beet, oil and fibre plants) provide for the Council to determine whether field inspections carried out in third countries on seed producing crops satisfy the conditions laid down in Community legislation and whether seed produced in these countries is equivalent to seed produced in the Community.

By virtue of Council Decision 95/514/EC, this equivalence was determined in twenty countries. Decision 95/514/EC will expire on 31 December 2002.

On the basis of the information collected by the Commission services within the Standing Committee on Seeds and obtained from Community comparative trials, these countries continue to afford the same guarantees.

Furthermore, following official requests submitted by Estonia, Latvia and Yugoslavia to the Commission and the examination of the available documentation, the Commission service feels satisfied on the readiness of these three countries to produce seed equivalent to seed produced in the Community.

The present proposal renews the equivalence until 31 December 2007 for all the third countries referred to in Decision 95/514/EC (other than Switzerland, covered since 1 June 2002 by "The Agreement between the European Community and the Swiss Confederation on trade in agricultural products"), and add Estonia, Latvia and Yugoslavia.

Proposal for a  
**COUNCIL DECISION**

**on the equivalence of field inspections carried out in third countries on seed producing crops and on the equivalence of seed produced in third countries**

**(Text with EEA relevance)**

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,

Having regard to the Treaty establishing the European Community.

Having regard to Council Directive 66/401/EEC of 14 June 1966 on the marketing of fodder plant seed<sup>1</sup>, and in particular Article 16 (1) thereof,

Having regard to Council Directive 66/402/EEC of 14 June 1966 on the marketing of cereal seed<sup>2</sup>, and in particular Article 16 (1) thereof,

Having regard to Council Directive 2002/54/EC of 13 June 2002 on the marketing of beet seed<sup>3</sup>, and in particular Article 23 (1) thereof,

Having regard to Council Directive 2002/57/EC of 13 June 2002 on the marketing of seed of oil and fibre plants<sup>4</sup>, and in particular Article 20 (1) thereof,

Having regard to the proposal from the Commission,

Whereas:

- (1) The rules on official seed control in Argentina, Australia, Bulgaria, Canada, Chile, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Croatia, Hungary, Israel, Latvia, Morocco, New Zealand, Poland, Romania, Slovenia, Slovakia, Turkey, the United States of America, Uruguay, Yugoslavia and South Africa provide for an official field inspection to be carried out during the period of seed production.

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<sup>1</sup> OJ 125, 11.7.1966, p. 2298/66. Directive as last amended by the Directive 2001/64/EC (OJ 234, 1.9.2001, p. 60).

<sup>2</sup> OJ 125, 11.7.1966, p. 1309/66. Directive as last amended by the Directive 2001/64/EC (OJ L 134, 1.9.2001, p. 60).

<sup>3</sup> OJ L 193, 20.7.2002, p. 12.

<sup>4</sup> OJ L 193, 20.7.2002, p. 74. Directive as amended by the Directive 2002/68/EC (OJ L 195, 24.7.2002, p. 32).

- (2) Those rules provide in principle that seed may be officially certified and seed packages officially closed in accordance with the OECD Schemes for the Varietal Certification of Seed moving in International Trade. Those rules also provide for seed sampling and testing in accordance with the methods of the International Seed Testing Association (ISTA), or where appropriate, in accordance with the rules of the Association of Official Seed Analysts (AOSA).
- (3) An examination of those rules and the manner in which they are applied in those third countries has shown that the field inspection of seed producing crops satisfies the conditions laid down in Directives 66/401/EEC, 66/402/EEC, 2002/54/EC and 2002/57/EC. The national provisions governing seed harvested and controlled in those countries afford the same assurances as regards the seed's characteristics and the arrangements for its examination, for ensuring seed identification, for marking and for control, as the provisions applicable to seed, harvested and controlled within the Community, provided that further conditions for seed producing crops and seed produced, in particular in respect of packages marking, are satisfied.
- (4) Council Decision 95/514/EC of 29 November 1995 on the equivalence of field inspections carried out in third countries on seed producing crops and on the equivalence of seed produced in third countries<sup>5</sup> provides that for a limited period field inspections carried out in certain third countries on seed-producing crops of certain species are considered as equivalent to field inspections carried out in accordance with Community legislation and that seed of certain species produced in those countries is considered as equivalent to seed produced in accordance with Community legislation.
- (5) As Decision 95/514/EC will expire on 31 December 2002, a new decision should be adopted and its scope extended to Estonia, Latvia and Yugoslavia.
- (6) It appears desirable to limit the period for which equivalence is recognized under this Decision to five years.
- (7) Certain amendments to the Annexes to this Decision should be adopted in accordance with Council Decision 1999/468/EC of 28 June 1999 laying down the procedure for the exercise of implementing powers conferred on the Commission<sup>6</sup>,

HAS ADOPTED THIS DECISION:

#### *Article 1*

Field inspections concerning the seed production crops of the species specified in Annex I carried out in the third countries listed in that Annex, shall be considered equivalent to field inspections carried out in accordance with Directives 66/401/EEC, 66/402/EEC, 2002/54/EC and 2002/57/EC provided that they:

- (a) are carried out officially by the Authorities listed in Annex I, or under the official supervision of those Authorities,

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<sup>5</sup> OJ L 296, 9.12.1995, p. 13. Decision as last amended by Commission Decision 2002/276/EC (OJ L 96, 13.4.2002, p. 28).

<sup>6</sup> OJ L 184, 17.7.1999, p. 23.

- (b) satisfy the conditions laid down in point A of Annex II to this Decision.

#### *Article 2*

Seed of the species specified in Annex I, produced in the third countries listed in that Annex and officially certified by the Authorities listed in that Annex shall be considered equivalent to seed complying with Directives 66/401/EEC, 66/402/EEC, 2002/54/EC and 2002/57/EC, if it satisfies the conditions laid down in point B of Annex II to this Decision.

#### *Article 3*

1. Where equivalent seed is 'relabelled and refastened' in the Community, within the meaning of OECD Schemes for the Varietal Certification of Seed moving in International Trade, the provisions of Directives 66/401/EEC, 66/402/EEC, 2002/54/EC and 2002/57/EC concerning the reclosing of packages produced in the Community shall apply by analogy.

The first subparagraph shall be without prejudice to the OECD rules applicable to such operations.

2. EC labels shall not be used for re-labelling within the Community, except for the following types of seed packages for which EC labels may be used:
  - (a) packages containing a blend of seed from two or more packages of seed of the same variety and category where at least one of the original packages contained seed of EC production and was labelled in accordance with EC requirements, provided that
    - (i) the seed of one or more of the component lots did not satisfy before blending the EC standards or other conditions as regards germination,
    - (ii) the blend is homogenous, and
    - (iii) there is an indication on the label of each country of production;
  - (b) small EC packages within the meaning of Directives 66/401/EEC or 2002/54/EC.

#### *Article 4*

Amendments to the Annexes, with the exception of those concerning column 1 of the table in Annex I, shall be adopted in accordance with the procedure laid down in Article 5.

#### *Article 5*

1. The Commission shall be assisted by the Standing Committee on Seeds and Propagating Material for Agriculture, Horticulture and Forestry.

2. Where reference is made to this paragraph Articles 4 and 7 of Decision 1999/468/EC shall apply.

The period laid down in Article 4(3) of Decision 1999/468/EC shall be set at one month.

*Article 6*

This Decision shall apply from 1 January 2003 to 31 December 2007.

*Article 7*

This Decision is addressed to the Member States.

Done at Brussels,

*For the Council  
The President*

## ANNEX I

### Countries, authorities and species

Country	Authority	Species referred to in the following Directives
1	2	3
Argentina	Secretaría de Agricultura, Ganadería, Pesca y Alimentación, Buenos Aires	66/401/EEC 66/402/EEC 2002/57/EC
Australia	A.F.F.A. Grains Section, Canberra	66/401/EEC 66/402/EEC 2002/57/EC
Bulgaria	Executive Agency for variety testing, field inspection and seed control, Sofia	2002/54/EC 66/401/EEC 66/402/EEC 2002/57/EC
Canada	Canadian Food Inspection Agency, Ottawa	66/401/EEC 66/402/EEC 2002/57/EC
Chile	Servicio Agrícola y Ganadero, Santiago	2002/54/EC 66/401/EEC 66/402/EEC 2002/57/EC
Czech Republic	Central Institute for Supervising and Testing in Agriculture, Praha	2002/54/EC 66/401/EEC 66/402/EEC 2002/57/EC
Estonia	Estonian Plant Production Inspectorate, Saku, Harjumaa,	66/401/EEC 66/402/EEC, other than <i>Zea mays</i> and <i>Sorghum spp.</i> 2002/57/EC
Croatia	State Institute for Seed and Seedlings, Osijek	2002/54/EC 66/401/EEC 66/402/EEC 2002/57/EC
Hungary	National Institute for Agricultural Quality Control, Budapest	2002/54/EC 66/401/EEC 66/402/EEC 2002/57/EC
Israel	Ministry of Agriculture, Bet-Dagan	66/401/EEC 66/402/EEC 2002/57/EC
Latvia	Ministry of Agriculture, Riga	66/401/EEC 66/402/EEC
Morocco	Service de Controle des Semences et des Plants, Rabat	66/401/EEC 66/402/EEC 2002/57/EC

Country	Authority	Species referred to in the following Directives
1	2	3
New Zealand	Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, Wellington	2002/54/EC 66/401/EEC 66/402/EEC 2002/57/EC
Poland	Seed Inspection Service General Inspectorate, Warszawa	2002/54/EC 66/401/EEC 66/402/EEC – other than <i>Zea mays</i> 2002/57/EC
Romania	Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries, Bucuresti	2002/54/EC 66/401/EEC 66/402/EEC 2002/57/EC
Slovenia	Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food, Ljubljana	66/401/EEC 66/402/EEC 2002/57/EC
Slovakia	Central Control and Testing Institute in Agriculture, Bratislava	2002/54/EC 66/401/EEC 66/402/EEC 2002/57/EC
Turkey	Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs, Ankara	2002/54/EC 66/401/EEC 66/402/EEC 2002/57/EC
United States of America	USDA, Beltsville, Maryland	2002/54/EC 66/401/EEC 66/402/EEC 2002/57/EC
Uruguay	Ministerio de Ganadería Agricultura y Pesca, Montevideo	66/401/EEC 66/402/EEC 2002/57/EC
Yugoslavia	Federal Ministry of Economic and Internal Trade, Belgrade	2002/54/EC 66/401/EEC 66/402/EEC 2002/57/EC
South Africa	National Department of Agriculture, Pretoria	66/401/EEC 66/402/EEC – only in respect of <i>Zea mays</i> and <i>Sorghum spp.</i> 2002/57/EC

## ANNEX II

### **A. Conditions relating to field inspections carried out in third countries on seed producing crops.**

1. Field inspections shall be carried out in accordance with national rules for the application of the OECD Schemes for the Varietal Certification of Seed moving in International Trade as follows:
  - sugar beet and fodder beet seed, in the case of *Beta vulgaris* referred to in Directive 2002/54/EC
  - grass and legume seed, in the case of the species referred to in Directive 66/401/EEC
  - crucifer seed and other oil and fibre species seed, in the case of the species referred to in Directives 66/401/EEC and 2002/57/EC
  - cereal seed, in the case of the species referred to in Directive 66/402/EEC, other than *Zea mays* and *Sorghum spp.*,
  - maize and sorghum seed, in the case of *Zea mays* and *Sorghum spp.* referred to in Directive 66/402/EEC.
2. Seed not finally certified shall be packed in officially closed packages which bear a special label provided for this purpose by the OECD.
3. Seed not finally certified shall be accompanied, without prejudice to the certificate provided by the OECD schemes, by an official certificate giving the following information:
  - reference number of the seed used to sow the field and name of the Member State or third country which certified that seed,
  - area cultivated,
  - quantity of seed,
  - the attestation that the conditions that have to be satisfied by the crops from which the seed comes have been fulfilled.

### **B. Conditions relating to seed produced in third countries**

1. Seed shall be officially certified and its packages officially closed and marked in accordance with national rules for the application of the OECD Schemes for the Varietal Certification of Seed moving in International Trade as follows; the seed lots shall be accompanied by the certificates required under those OECD schemes:
  - sugar beet and fodder beet seed, in the case of *Beta vulgaris* referred to in the Directive 2002/54/EC,

- grass and legume seed, in the case of the species referred to in Directive 66/401/EEC,
- crucifer seed and other oil or fibre species seed, in the case of the species referred to in Directives 66/401/EEC and 2002/57/EC,
- cereal seed, in the case of the species referred to in Directive 66/402/EEC, other than *Zea mays* and *Sorghum* spp.,
- maize and sorghum seed, in the case of *Zea mays* and *Sorghum* spp. referred to in Directive 66/402/EEC.

Moreover, seed shall satisfy the conditions of Community rules other than those relating to varietal identity and varietal purity.

2. Seed shall satisfy the following conditions:

2.1. The conditions which seed shall satisfy in accordance with the second subparagraph of paragraph 1 are laid down in the following Directives:

- Directive 66/401/EEC, Annex II
- Directive 66/402/EEC, Annex II
- Directive 2002/54/EC, Annex I (B)
- Directive 2002/57/EC, Annex II

2.2. For the purpose of the examination to check whether the above mentioned conditions have been satisfied, samples shall be taken officially in accordance with the ISTA rules and their weights shall conform to the weight stipulated under such methods, taking into account those specified in the following Directives:

- Directive 66/401/EEC, Annex III, columns 3 and 4,
- Directive 66/402/EEC, Annex III, columns 3 and 4,
- Directive 2002/54/EC, Annex II, second line,
- Directive 2002/57/EC, Annex III, columns 3 and 4,

2.3. The examination shall be carried out officially in accordance with the rules established under the ISTA rules.

2.4. By way of derogation from subparagraph 2.2 and 2.3, seed sampling and seed testing may be carried out in accordance with the ‘Derogatory experiment on seed sampling and seed analysis’ set out in Annex V (A) to the Decision adopted by the OECD Council on 28 September 2000 on the OECD Schemes for the Varietal Certification of Seed moving in International Trade.

3. Seed shall satisfy the following additional conditions in respect of package marking:

3.1. The following official information shall be given:

- a statement that the seed satisfies the conditions of Community rules other than those relating to varietal identity and varietal purity: ‘the seed complies with EC rules and standards’,
- a statement that the seed has been sampled and tested in accordance with current international methods: ‘Sampled and analysed according to ISTA rules for orange or green certificates by ..., (name or initials of the ISTA seed testing station)’,
- date of official closing,
- where seed lots have been ‘relabelled and refastened’ within the meaning of the OECD schemes, also a statement that this operation took place, the most recent date of reclosing and the Authorities responsible therefore,
- country of production,
- declared net or gross weight or declared number of pure seeds or, in the case of beet seed, clusters, and
- where weight is indicated and granulated pesticides, pelleting substances or other solid additives are used, the nature of the additive and also the approximate ratio between the weight of pure seed and the total weight.

This information may be given either on the OECD label or on an additional official label which shall give the name of the service and the country. Any suppliers’ labels shall be drawn up in such a manner that they cannot be confused with the additional official label.

3.2. In the case of seed of a variety which has been genetically modified, any label or document, official or otherwise, which is affixed to or accompanies the seed lot, shall clearly indicate that the variety has been genetically modified and provide for any other information as may be determined in the authorisation procedure required under Community law.

3.3. An official notice placed inside the package shall give at least the reference number of the lot, the species and the variety; in addition, in the case of beet seed, it shall be stated where appropriate whether the seed is monogerm or precision seed.

This notice is not necessary if the minimum information is printed indelibly on the package or if an adhesive label or a label of non-tear material is used.

- 3.4. Any chemical treatment of the seed and the active substance shall be noted either on the official label or on a special label as well as on the container or inside it.
- 3.5. All information required for official labels, for official notices and for packages shall be given in at least one of the official languages of the Community.
4. The seed lots shall be accompanied by an orange or green ISTA certificate giving the information relating to the conditions in paragraph 2.
5. In the case of basic seed of varieties which are exclusively maintained within the Community, the seed of the preceding generations shall have been produced within the Community.

In the case of basic seed of other varieties, the seed of the preceding generations shall have been produced under the responsibility of the persons responsible for the maintenance breeding, referred to in the Common Catalogue of Varieties of Agricultural Plant Species either within the Community or in a third country which has been granted, under Decision 97/788/EC<sup>7</sup>, the equivalence of checks on practices for the maintenance of varieties carried out in third countries.

6. Basic seed shall have been produced and officially controlled and certified:
  - either within the Community, or
  - in a third country which has been granted equivalence under this Decision for the production of basic seed of the species concerned, provided that it has been produced from seed produced in accordance with paragraph 5.
7. In the case of Canada and the United States of America, by way of derogation from:
  - paragraphs 2.2 and 2.3,
  - paragraph 3.1., second indent, and
  - paragraph 4,

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<sup>7</sup> OJ L 322, 25.11.1997, p. 39. Decision as last amended by Decision 2002/580/EC (OJ L 184, 13.7.2002, p. 26).

sampling, testing and issue of seed analysis certificates may be carried out by officially recognised seed testing laboratories according to the Rules of the AOSA. In this case:

- the following statement shall be given under paragraph 3.1.: ‘Sampled and analysed according to AOSA by ...’ (name or initials of the officially recognised seed testing laboratory), and
- the certificates required under paragraph 4 shall be issued by the officially recognised seed testing laboratory under the responsibility of the Authorities listed in Annex I.