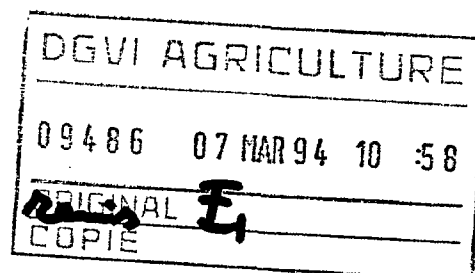


**Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food**

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Mr [REDACTED]

DGV1 E-I

The European Commission

120/130 Rue de la Loi

Brussels B-1049

Belgium

4 March 1994

Dear Mr [REDACTED],

As requested in your fax of 1 March, I have pleasure in forwarding the UK views on the working document on draft quality standards and the draft regulation concerning the rules applying to producers' organisations.

QUALITY STANDARDS

I shall begin with one or two general comments. First of all, I must emphasise that the UK does not favour an unnecessarily complex set of standards. We would prefer a simple standard which augmented the standards already applied by traders and retailers. We understand that there must be standards for EC bananas which will determine the payment of aid to producers. In this connection, we would also remind you that the Commission proposal for aid to ACP producers, on which the Council has yet to take a decision, also establishes a link between quality standards and aid payments. If this proposal were to be adopted, a point of inspection within the Community would need to be determined for the monitoring of ACP sendings given the impracticability of stationing Member State inspectors in the ACP production areas.

More generally, we feel that discussion of how the standards will be applied is necessary before any decision is taken on the standards themselves. For that reason, as well as the lack of consensus on the type of standard required, we think it would be highly premature to vote on the proposed standards at the meeting of the Management Committee on 10 March. This is both an important and a complex issue. There have been very significant changes in the draft standards before the

Committee. Time is needed to ensure that appropriate standards which can be reasonably applied are adopted.

The following comments apply to the working document on draft quality standards (BANAN/TRAV94/03.REV1).

DEFINITION OF THE PRODUCT

We are content with the Annex listing those varieties which should be covered by the standards. We may, however, wish to suggest amendments following a meeting we will shortly be having with trade representatives.

APPLICATION

As we have repeatedly stressed at meetings of the Management Committee, we feel strongly that the standards should apply to green bananas only. This is the more important if the quality standard is to be linked to payment of income aid to producers, who cannot be held responsible for the state of the fruit after ripening.

QUALITY

Classification

We are not convinced of the need for the 'Extra' category - two categories would suffice.

Categories I and II refer to defects on the skin not exceeding 1 cm² (Category I) or 2 cm² (Category II) of the total surface area of the finger. We are not sure how useful these figures are since in practice the area affected could not be reliably measured. In any case, we note that it has now been suggested that the references to defects of the skin as related to total surface area should be deleted from the draft Codex Alimentarius standards.

MEASUREMENT

We are strongly opposed to any system of classification which links quality to size. There is no established link between the quality of a banana and its size, and we feel that if size categories are introduced, there should be no possibility of misinterpretation in terms of quality. We therefore question the need for complex size categories - a straightforward minimum should be sufficient to exclude immature fruit. This minimum would not, of course, apply to dwarf varieties.

This is an issue on which we feel strongly. UK Ministers are committed to removing unnecessary regulatory requirements and could not agree to prescriptive standards for which no clear need had been established.

PRESENTATION

The paragraph under item C which refers to the presentation of the fruit after ripening, is not necessary if the standard is to apply to green bananas only. In any case, we do not see the need to set out requirements for presentation of ripe fruit; the trade should be permitted to determine how to present bananas in the manner most attractive to the consumer.

We are holding a meeting with our trade contacts to discuss the draft standards on Monday, 7 March. We may well write to you again after this meeting to pass on their comments

PRODUCER ORGANISATIONS

You have also asked for comments on the draft text laying down detailed rules concerning banana producers' organisations (VI/3059/94-FR Rev.1). We have no difficulty with this text.

John Swartz

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Trade Policy and Tropical Food Division

Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food

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Full postal address **DGVI E-I
The European Commission**
Postcode [REDACTED]
Fax No. [REDACTED]
REPEAT:
Name [REDACTED]
Full postal address [REDACTED]
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MESSAGE (and/or further repeats; attach further pages if necessary)

I have pleasure in enclosing a letter to
Mr [REDACTED] setting out the views on
banana quality standards and rules applying to
banana producer organisations.