

Extension Toolkit Notes

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Afghan Grapes: Grading for Quality

Afghan grape production is geared toward quantity rather than quality. Two 100g clusters earn the farmer the same as one 200g bunch. There is no price differential paid to the farmer to serve as an incentive to increase the quality of his produce.

If Afghan grape farmers are to enjoy higher prices, demand for their produce must be increased to draw down the supply. Developing new markets abroad is the best way to do this. India is a huge potential market for Afghan table grapes.

However, foreign markets have standards of quality that exporters must meet if they intend to do business with them. It is important for farmers and merchants to be familiar with these standards if Afghanistan is to enter their markets. Produce that meets a market's standards of quality is the first requirement of successful marketing.

India's requirements for grape standards are similar to those of the EU. The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) defined standards for fresh table grape sales to consumers in the document *UNECE Standard FFV-19*. The purpose of the standard is to define quality requirements for table grapes at the export control stage, after preparation and packaging.

The standard defines quality, size and presentation attributes for fresh table grapes. Table grapes are classified as "Extra" class, class I or class II.

I Quality

A. Minimum Requirements

Clusters and berries:

- Sound; produce affected by rotting and deterioration such as to make it unfit for consumption is excluded
- Clean and practically free of any visible foreign matter
- Practically free from pests
- Practically free from damage caused by pests
- Free of abnormal external moisture
- Free of any foreign smell or taste

- Free of all visible traces of molds.

Clusters:

- Carefully picked
- Sufficiently developed and display satisfactory ripeness

Berries:

- Intact
- Well-formed
- Normally developed
- Pigmentation due to sun is not a defect

The development and condition of the table grapes must be such as to enable them

- To withstand transport and handling
- To arrive in satisfactory condition at the place of destination

B. Maturity Requirements

The juice of the berries must have a refractometric index of at least:

- 13° Brix for seeded varieties (except Cardinal and Victoria, which should be 12°)
- 14° Brix for seedless varieties.
- [The minimum Brix for the Indian market is 16°]

In addition all varieties must have a satisfactory sugar/acid ratio [The minimum ratio for the Indian market is 20:1].

C. Classification

“Extra Class”

Table grapes in this class must be of superior quality. In shape, development, and coloring the clusters must be typical for the variety, allowing for the district in which they are grown, and have no defects.

Berries must be firm, firmly attached, evenly spaced along the stalk, and have their bloom virtually intact.

“Class I”

Table grapes in this category must be in good quality. In shape, development and coloring the clusters must be typical of the variety, allowing for the district in which they are grown.

Berries must be firm, firmly attached, and have their bloom intact. They may, however, be less evenly spaced along the stalk than in the “Extra Class”.

The following slight defects, however, may be allowed provided they do not affect the general appearance of the produce, the quality, the keeping quality, and presentation in the package:

- Slight defects in shape
- Slight defects in coloring
- Very slight sun scorch affecting the skin only

“Class II”

This class includes table grapes which do not qualify for inclusion in the higher class but meet the minimum requirements specified above.

The clusters may show slight defects in shape, development, and coloring provided these do not impair the essential characteristics of the variety, allowing for the district in which they are grown.

The berries must be sufficiently firm and sufficiently attached, and where possible, still have their bloom. They may be less evenly spaced along their stalk than in Class I

The following defects are allowed provided the the table grapes retain their essential characteristics as regards the quality, the keep quality and presentation:

- Defects in shape
- Defects in coloring
- Slight sun-scorch affecting the skin only
- Slight bruising
- Slight skin defects

II Size

Size is determined by the weight of the bunch.

	Table Grapes: minimum size requirements per bunch	
	All varieties excluding small- berry varieties	Small-berry varieties
“Extra” class	200g	150g
Class I	150g	100g
Class II	100g	75g

III Presentation

A. Uniformity

The contents of each package must be uniform and contain only clusters of the same origin, variety, quality, and degree of ripeness.

In the case of the “Extra” class, clusters must be of more or less identical in size and coloring.

In the case of grapes packed in small consumer packages of a net weight not exceeding one kilogram, uniformity of variety and origin is not required.

The visible part of the contents of the package must be representative of the entire contents.

B. Packaging

The table grapes must be packed in such a way as to protect the produce properly.

In the case of the “Extra” class, the clusters must be packed in a single layer.

The materials used inside the package must be new, clean and of a quality such as to avoid causing any external or internal damage to the produce. The use of materials, particularly paper or stamps, bearing trade specifications is allowed provided the printing or labeling is done with non-toxic ink or glue.

Stickers individually affixed to the produce shall be such that when removed, neither leave visible traces of glue, nor lead to skin defects.

Packages must be free of all foreign matter, although a fragment of vine shoot no more than 5cm in length may be left on the stem of the bunch as a form of special presentation.

Increasing Afghanistan’s share of the foreign grape market requires a shift from a quantity-based production system to a quality-based one. That shift depends upon a price differential paid to farmers for high quality produce. Farmers will pay little attention to calls for increased quality without a monetary incentive.

The extension agent will lose credibility with the farmer if he advocates a shift away from quantity-based systems without guaranteeing a benefit to the farmer. Therefore, extension agents must educate farmers about the possibilities of a price differential while being sensitive to the farmers’ reality. They must also keep in contact with traders and be aware of current market trends that may either be beneficial or detrimental to the farmer.