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**PROPOSALS FOR GUIDANCE FOR THE PREPARATION OF FUTURE UPOV TEST
GUIDELINES
(CRITERIA AND PRINCIPLES FOR THE SELECTION OF CHARACTERISTICS)**

Document prepared by experts from Germany

**Proposals for guidance for the preparation of future UPOV Test Guidelines
(Criteria and principles for the selection of characteristics)**

1. *Purpose of the Guidelines*

The purpose of setting up the UPOV Test Guidelines is to provide a harmonized basis for DUS testing and for establishing variety descriptions in a standardized form. In this way co-operation in examination between countries is facilitated or even only made possible. On the other hand the Guidelines give the applicants information on the characteristics to be studied and on the questions which they will be asked.

The tools fixed in the Guidelines are the characteristics and their expressions by which the varieties are defined (described) and which are the basis for identification. This implies that these characteristics have also to be used for assessing uniformity and stability.

2. *Species to be provided with Guidelines*

Wide-spread species with numerous varieties in several countries should no doubt be provided with Guidelines. In general more than one country should have interest and experience with the respective species in order to prepare Guidelines. So in case of new species with no experience in any of the countries concerned it would be best first to do some studies and to get practical experience before starting to prepare Guidelines.

3. *General requirements for a characteristic*

A characteristic to be taken up in the Guidelines should at least fulfill the following requirements

- clear differentiation should be possible in the given collection
- it should be possible to fulfill usual uniformity requirements
- observation and evaluation should be clearly defined
- observation and evaluation should be practicable with reasonable effort.

4. *Extent of the table of characteristics and categories of characteristics*

As a general rule the table of characteristics should include as many characteristics as necessary to differentiate all varieties in the countries concerned. This will mean that in species with big collections all characteristics which fulfill in a way the usual criteria have to be taken up, whereas in species with small collection there may be a choice to take up only those characteristics which solve the distinctness questions in the collections most effectively. The characteristics taken up should be useful for a longer period, on the other hand there is no need to take into consideration characteristics which only might be useful in future collections. So the notion should be kept that all characteristics included in UPOV Guidelines and their states of expression as well as

their way of assessment, have proven to be useful and effective for distinguishing varieties.

The role of the example varieties in this context is to reflect the collections which were the background for the establishment of the Guidelines giving the scope of proven applicability.

Depending on environmental conditions, size and composition of the national collections and breeding development the set of characteristics needed for DUS test will be different in the individual countries or regions. However, a certain number of characteristics will be useful and discriminating in all countries, they are earmarked with an asterisk. Out of these the characteristics for grouping or prescreening are laid down. One could argue that the UPOV Guidelines might restrict to these asterisk characteristics and leave it to the individual countries to find in addition the necessary characteristics chosen according to agreed standardized principles. Yet this would reduce the intended efficiency of the Guidelines to be a harmonized tool for international co-operation. Even if it were possible to compile the characteristics developed and used in the individual countries – attempts in the past failed – and to add them in an annex, the validity of the Guidelines in view to the usefulness of the characteristics would be restricted, not to speak of harmonized variety descriptions which would have to be the basis for international co-operation.

Characteristics which have proven to be useful in more than one country but not useful or necessary in others should nevertheless be taken up in the UPOV Guidelines, in this case as non-asterisk characteristic. Consequently, those characteristics which are of use only in one country or which do not fulfill the general requirements, should not be included; they may be used in individual cases where applicable.

The Guidelines are therefore open for the individual use of additional characteristics not included there as long as these follow the general requirements. However, the necessity for additional characteristics should be a limited one. Cases where in a species a high number of additional characteristics is used in the different countries should be addressed and the reasons for this situation be discussed. It might be the case that the testing philosophy ought to be clarified and agreed on.

Additional characteristics taken up on national level as routine characteristics or for individual cases will occur and will be taken up according to necessity for establishing distinctness, facing the increasing extent of the variety collections and their changing composition.

In any case the uniformity aspect should be taken into account when an additional characteristic is taken up. This means that the varieties already accepted should have shown not to have any problems in keeping the uniformity (and the stability) standards. Otherwise such a characteristic should not be used as a routine characteristic. On an individual case basis a characteristic should not be used when the candidate variety does show to be uniform but not the reference variety against which distinctness is to be established.

5. *Revision of existing UPOV-Guidelines*

The following facts should give rise to revise Guidelines

- the characteristics and/or their assessment have changed or should be changed in the light of experience and of development of the collections, so that the Guidelines are insofar no longer representative.
- the majority of the example varieties is no longer available in a living collection.
- new methods or new types of characteristics are available and to be used in DUS test

The Technical Working Parties should accompany the adopted Guidelines finding out periodically their use in the different countries and notifying changes and amendments on national level. The status could then be regularly discussed and the adequate decision on a revision of the Guidelines be taken. Setting up only a survey on characteristics used in the different countries without any harmonization would not fulfill the purpose of the Guidelines.

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