



**Food and Agriculture Organization  
of the United Nations**

Summary Report

**Stakeholder consultation on strengthening national capacity  
for risk-based food import control  
within One Health Framework in the Philippines**

21 February 2018  
Quezon City, Philippines



Conducted under the FAO SP4 One Health project  
**Strengthening national capacity for risk-based food import control  
within a One Health framework**

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Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific  
Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations  
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## Abstract

This report is the output of the one-day stakeholder consultation meeting on strengthening the national capacity for risk-based food import control within One Health framework in the Philippines, held in Quezon City, the Philippines on 21 February 2018. It was attended by 43 participants working in relevant areas to imported food controls from 12 agencies of the government of the Philippines and 2 private sectors. A draft national situation report outlining the strengths, gaps and potential areas for improvement of imported food control system in the Philippines was presented by national consultants. The consultation has discussed and verified the information introduced in the report, made recommendations and agreed on the follow up actions towards an effective risk-based imported food control system in the country.

Keywords: food safety; import controls; inspection; capacity building; One Health; Philippines; food chains; food contamination; food legislation; food quality; food standards; foodborne diseases.

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## Acknowledgements

The consultation was organized under the FAO project “Strengthening national capacity for risk-based food import control within a One Health framework, SP4 One Health Project 2017”. This meeting report has been prepared by Mr Rafael Umbrero, Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist in FAO Philippines and finalized by Dr Masami Takeuchi, Food Safety Officer in FAO. FAO would like to express its thanks to Attorney Paz Benavidez and Dr Amelia W. Tejada, and all the participants of the consultation for their valuable inputs for the preparation of this document.

## Abbreviations and acronyms

BAI	Bureau of Animal Industry
BFAR	Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources
BPI	Bureau of Plant Industry
DA-OASR	Department of Agriculture – Office of Assistant Secretary for Regulations
DA-OUPP	Department of Agriculture - Office of Undersecretary for Policy and Planning
DA-PRS	Department of Agriculture - Policy Research Service
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FPA	Fertilizer and Pesticide Authority
NDA	National Dairy Authority
NFA-FDC	National Food Authority – Food Development Center
NMIS	National Meat Inspection Service
PCA	Philippine Coconut Authority
SRA	Sugar Regulatory Administration

## 1. Overview

One-day stakeholder consultation meeting on strengthening the national capacity for risk-based food import control within One Health framework in the Philippines was held in Quezon City, the Philippines on 21 February 2018. The consultation was attended by 43 participants from 12 agencies of the government of the Philippines and 2 private sectors and FAO to verify the information presented in the national situation report on the status of the imported food controls in the Philippines, and to agree on the recommendations and follow up actions. The agenda of the meeting and the list of participants can be found in Annex 1 and 2 respectively.

## 2. Introduction

Food products have been the third most valuable commodity group traded internationally, according to the World Trade Organization (WTO) International Trade Statistics 2014. In the last decades, the food trade trend is continuously growing and guide is very important to ensure fair trade and safeguard the health of consumers. The WTO has set two international agreements, the Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (SPS) and Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) that defined a framework for control measures. These two agreements have acknowledged the importance of harmonizing standards internationally and the Codex food standards have become significant food safety reference documents to follow these agreements. However, many developing countries face challenges on adopting the Codex standards as the overarching framework for their control measures.

Under the project entitled “Strengthening National Capacity for Risk-based Food Import Control within One Health Framework”, Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) has collaborated with four countries, namely Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Nepal, and Philippines, to provide guidance on key Codex principles and to assist the country to develop technical capacities that enables risk-based management, planning and scientific assessment and inspection services for imported food control.

In the Philippines, a desk review and consultations with relevant stakeholders concerning agricultural food imports have been conducted to clearly understand where the country stands in terms of progress in capacity development for risk based imported food controls. Based on these, a national situation report was drafted outlining the strengths of imported food control system in the Philippines including the gaps and potential areas for improvement. Following to that, this consultation workshop with the food safety regulatory agencies and other related agencies in the Department of Agriculture including the private sector was organized with the objectives of:

- collectively validating the national situation report of the imported food controls in the Philippines,
- and agreeing on the recommendations and follow up actions.

## 3. Participants

A total of 38 participants from the following 12 government agencies and two private sectors participated in the consultation workshop:

### A. National Government Agencies

- Bureau of Animal Industry (BAI)
- Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR)
- Bureau of Plant Industry (BPI)
- Department of Agriculture – Office of Assistant Secretary for Regulations (DA- OASR)
- Department of Agriculture - Office of Undersecretary for Policy and Planning (DA-OUPP)
- Department of Agriculture - Policy Research Service (DA-PRS)



- Fertilizer and Pesticide Authority (FPA)
- Sugar Regulatory Administration (SRA)
- National Dairy Authority (NDA)
- National Food Authority – Food Development Center (NFA-FDC)
- National Meat Inspection Service (NMIS)
- Philippine Coconut Authority (PCA)

#### B. Private Sector

- FoodSphere Inc.
- San Miguel Foods

## 4. Presentations

### 4.1. Opening Remarks

In his opening message, Mr Segfredo Serrano, Undersecretary for Policy and Planning of the Department of Agriculture, welcomed the participants and expressed his support to the national situation report on imported food control system in the Philippines that identifies the needs and potential areas to be improved. He stated that the crucial step is to find viable solutions to improve the regulatory system, and he encouraged the participants, who are managing the regulatory system and are working on the ground, to have a precise discussion on what needs to be done. Referring to Food Safety Act 2013 that delineates the mandate of each agency and provides a framework for the implementation of these regulatory mandates, he reminded the group the challenges faced during the implementation due to different approaches of the Department of Agriculture and Department of Health.

Mr Jose Luis Fernandez, FAO Representative in the Philippines, highlighted the importance of the report to help relevant stakeholders to work more collaboratively and understand clearly the country's progress on capacity development for risk based imported food control. He also acknowledged the valuable inputs of everyone in the discussions for the refinement of the report as well as to help FAO to continue supporting the government effectively in relation to international food standards, trade and consumer health protection through Codex principles.



Mr. Segfredo Serrano, Undersecretary for Policy and Planning of the Department of Agriculture delivers his welcome message.



Mr. Jose Luis Fernandez, FAO Representative in the Philippines delivers his welcome message.

### 4.2. Expert Presentations

Dr Masami Takeuchi, Food Safety Officer in FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, explained that effective imported food controls require understanding of the priorities in the context of the country and using the available resources effectively. This effectiveness is achieved by having a One Health oriented risk-based approach with science based risk assessment, risk management that targets the priorities for the country, and continuous risk communication between the competent authorities,

stakeholders and consumers. She shared a good example from Australia on the food safety culture which promotes the shift of regulators from policing the food safety practices in a business to educating and advising them on safe food production. It was stressed out that achieving a food safety culture takes time and resources through a proactive and collaborative approach.

Ms Paz Benavidez and Dr Amelia Tejada, National Consultants in FAO, presented the draft situation report which discussed the main imported food products and major trade partners of the Philippines which enter the country through the 10 major seaports and airports located in three major islands of Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao. Philippines is the second largest market in ASEAN for food trade and effective risk based import food controls are needed to protect consumer health and ensure effective Imported food control systems in the country. The report outlined the roles and responsibilities of four agencies relevant to food import (BAI, BFAR, BPI, and NMIS), current processes of accreditation, pre-border, border and post-border controls, inspection and risk management actions.

The consultants shared the strengths of the import food controls in the Philippines that they identified in the report including among others, the Food Safety Act enacted in 2013, quarantine divisions with well-set roles and responsibilities, pest risk analysis, transparent communication with the importers. Following to that, they listed the needs improvements focusing on risk management actions including better understanding of risk analysis by the officers whose work is related to import food control, effective risk categorization, reviewing the existing inspection system and aligning it with Codex recommendations.



Dr Masami Takeuchi, Food Safety Officer of FAO, discusses about risks management options during the consultation workshop.



Ms Paz Benavidez, FAO national consultant, presents the situational report.

## 5. Discussion Highlights

The national situation report with the strengths and improvement need recommendations were discussed in which the participants generally agreed. In general, the situation report was acceptable to the participants. Some areas for improvement were discussed as follows:

### A. Data Management

Importer profiles are collected by individual agencies and are available to the public to some extent. Results of laboratory analysis at the border are being compiled; however, most of these data are not standardized and centrally stored, usually stays at border control office.

### B. Border Controls

#### **Pre-border**

- Only the BPI has established risk categorization guidelines which mainly focuses on pest and diseases. Food safety considerations still need to be developed. BAI, NMIS and BFAR have no official guidelines in place for risk categorization.

- BPI and BAI/NMIS conduct pre-border inspections for plants and animal/meat products, while BFAR for fisheries currently do not perform pre-border inspections.

#### **Border**

- Samples for laboratory analysis are collected by agencies at the border. However, most goods that passes physical examination are released to the importers prior to result of the laboratory analysis (and retailers are already at the ports) due to long laboratory analysis procedures. In this case, laboratory results are only used in risk profiling purposes (if an importer often exceed the standards, then the importer should be monitored and vigilantly inspected). In addition, laboratories for chemical and microbiological analysis are located outside the ports, which in this instance laboratory analysis becomes a post-border control measure.
- There is a need for active involvement and coordination of the Food and Drug Administration representatives responsible for processed food at border control.
- There is a need to develop sampling protocol for specific testing for pest and diseases, and food safety.

#### **Post-Border**

- Plant/fisheries products are critical because there is no post-border control unlike meat.
- BPI and NMIS conduct market surveillance, however, law enforcement on non-compliance to standards is still with the Local Government Units.

#### **C. Risk Management**

- Better data sharing among agencies is very important for identifying risk management options for better risk-informed decisions.
- The country is currently developing a rapid alert system (Philippine Rapid Alert System) under the interagency technical working group created by the policy making body, Food Safety Regulation Coordinating Board (FSRCB). It was further recommended to DA to be involved in a related rapid alert system, International Network of Food Safety Authorities (INFOSAN).

#### **D. Involvement of the Food and Drugs Administration**

- Getting the active participation of FDA is specifically recommended in border inspection.
- A risk categorization training is needed for FDA, Customs, quarantine and food safety officers.

## **6. Recommendations and follow up actions**

### **Reviewing the inspection system to be based on the Codex “Principles for the Use of Sampling and Testing in International Food Trade” (CAC/GL 83-2013)**

- The participants acknowledged the need to review inspection system and to use the Codex principles by the food safety regulatory agencies. In addition, national food safety standards (e.g. maximum residue levels) are not yet established which are to be developed by the Bureau of Agriculture and Fisheries Products Standards, the agency mandated by the Food Safety Act.
- The participants have agreed to develop commodity-based standard manual of operations for sampling and testing by the food safety regulatory agencies when national standards have been developed.

### **Improving laboratory infrastructures**

- A centralized chemical and microbiological laboratory at the port area was recommended for immediate laboratory analysis.
- Consideration of strategic locations for laboratories was recommended, especially designation of certain commodities to specific port for more organized monitoring. It was recalled that there was a draft administrative order before but it did not materialized.

#### **Training of personnel on risk analysis and laboratory analysis.**

- Trainings of personnel on risk analysis (risk profiling and risk categorization) for better communication among competent authorities.
- Technical laboratory trainings on risk inspection techniques, i.e. rapid test at borders. Initially it was suggested to explore on the Rapid Bioassay of pesticide residues however, BPI shared their experienced that it is not really reliable because it is color reaction, qualitative, only positive/negative, and high error. There false negative results.

#### **Issuance of risk categorization regulations**

- Risk assessment and profiling are already performed at the port but there is no risk categorization regulations to guide the agencies in conducting inspections, and imposing regulatory requirements.
- A regulation for conducting regular audits of foreign plantations, facilities for fish, fishery and aquatic products; and setting-up a pre-audit for fish and fishery/aquatic resources before market access; and to include food safety requirements in the pre-audit
- Pest risk analysis (PRA) for traditional exporters of plant products.

#### **Institutionalization of Department of Agriculture Trade Enabling Risk Management System**

- The guidelines have already been developed but still awaiting for the Bureau of Customs memorandum order.

#### **Funds for the attendance of inspectors to CODEX meetings**

- The secretariat is currently revising procedural manual and will explore how to increase exposure of inspectors to Codex meetings.

## Annex 1. Agenda of the meeting

08.30 – 09.00	<b>Registration</b>
09.00 – 09.30	<b>Welcome Remarks</b>  Mr. Segfredo Serrano <i>Undersecretary for Policy and Planning, DA</i>  Mr. José Luis Fernandez <i>FAO Representative in the Philippines</i>
09.30 – 09.45	<b>Group Photo and Introduction of Participants</b>
09.45 – 10:00	<b>Presentation 1: Objectives and expected outputs of the meeting</b>  Ms. Masami Takeuchi <i>Food Safety Officer, FAO RAP</i>
10.00 – 10.15	Tea/coffee break
10.15 – 11.00	<b>Presentation 2: National situation report on imported food control</b>  Atty. Paz Benavidez II Dr. Amelia Tejada <i>National Consultants</i>
11.00 – 11.30	<b>Structured discussion 1</b> General imported food control flow and importer profiles
11.30 – 12.00	<b>Structured discussion 2:</b> Roles and responsibilities, documents and tools for imported food control
12.00 – 13.00	Lunch
13.00 – 13.45	<b>Structured discussion 3:</b> Inspection and risk management actions
13.45 – 14.30	<b>Structured discussion 4:</b> Quick review on information exchange, communication, training and education
14.30 – 14.45	Tea/coffee break
14.45 – 15.00	<b>Summary of the meeting and the next steps</b>  Ms. Masami Takeuchi <i>Food Safety Officer, FAO RAP</i>
15.00 – 15.15	<b>Closing remarks</b>  Ms. Amparo Ampil Chief, Food Agriculture and Fisheries Division, DA-Policy Research Service

## Annex 2. List of participants

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