



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

Meeting summary report

**Stakeholder consultations on imported food control situation
in Myanmar**

7 November 2017, Yangon
9 November 2017, Nay Pyi Taw
Myanmar

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

Information on Myanmar's national imported food control system was collected during previous projects and pre-consultation meetings with relevant government agencies. To build on these efforts and to validate the information collected, two one-day stakeholder consultations were held under the FAO project "Strengthening national capacity for risk-based food import control within a One Health Framework" in Yangon and Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar on 7 and 9 November 2017, respectively. The consultations were attended by 30 participants from various governmental stakeholders whose work is relevant to imported food controls. Myanmar Inspection and Testing Service stated that currently, all foods are considered high risk and individually assessed, mostly based on documentation. A structured risk prioritization of imported commodities and risk-based inspections at borders is lacking in the current system. The laboratories of the Livestock Breeding and Veterinary Department report that quarantine capacities are best developed in Yangon, and are absent at other border points. Laboratory capacities are limited and cannot be used by different government departments. There is a significant illegal trade of livestock that are in poor health. Myanmar Livestock Association highlighted the need for investing in and modernizing the infrastructure for livestock. Myanmar Fisheries Association stated that the national demand for fish is increasing but there are concerns about the risks to domestic fish stocks due to the illegal fish trade. Based on the critical issues raised by each agency during the consultations, immediate action recommendations include: 1) recognizing the significant illegal food import trade and addressing it in future actions; 2) improving plant and animal food clearances in line with international Sanitary and Phytosanitary measures; 3) developing procedures for sampling and inspecting imported foods; 4) developing and using a risk-based priority commodities list; and 5) improving quarantine and testing laboratory capacities. A national situation report with strengths, gaps and potential areas for improvement of the imported food control system in Myanmar was compiled by stakeholders in early 2018.

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

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Abbreviations and acronyms

DoF	Department of Fisheries
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FDA	Food and Drug Administration
MACCS	Myanmar Automated Cargo Clearance System
MITIS	Myanmar Inspection and Testing Services Ltd
MoALI	Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation
MoC	Ministry of Commerce
SOPs	standard operating procedures

Overview

Two one-day stakeholder consultations on the imported food control situation in Myanmar were held under the FAO project “Strengthening national capacity for risk-based food import control within a One Health Framework” in Yangon and Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar on 7 and 9 November 2017, respectively. The consultations were attended by 30 participants from various governmental stakeholders whose work is relevant to imported food control and resource people to discuss the implementation of an effective risk-based food import control system in Myanmar (see Annex for the list of participants). Critical issues raised by each agency are summarized, and a compilation of pre-border, border and border control issues is concluded at the end of the report. A national situation report with strengths, gaps and potential areas for improvement of the imported food control system in Myanmar was compiled by stakeholders in early 2018.

1. Background

A considerable amount of information was gained from previous consultations and mission visits to Myanmar (see TCP/MYA/3503-BABY 7: “Enhancing inter-ministerial coordination for strengthening food safety control management in Myanmar”). The pre-consultation meetings provided opportunities to explore previous understandings of Myanmar’s food regulations and imported food controls. One-on-one meetings were requested for all principle ministries and departments involved in food importation, including Customs, Department of Fisheries, Livestock Breeding and Veterinary Department, Agriculture and Plant Protection departments, Food and Drug Administration (FDA), Myanmar Inspection and Testing Service (MITS), and relevant industry associations. Given the short timeframe, it was not possible to organize one-on-one meetings with all of these departments; therefore, the focus was on discussions from previous missions and from the two national consultations.

2. Critical issues raised by Myanmar Inspection and Testing Service

MITS identified the following issues:

- Overall, imported food inspection services are inconsistent at major ports and, particularly, at land border checkpoints.
- Myanmar lacks a strong risk-based framework for classifying and managing imported food. Rather than inspecting critical commodities based on advice of the risks related to imported foods, the Ministry of Commerce (MoC) has identified certain commodities as examples of foods that need to be inspected upon arrival. This list has not been reviewed or updated on a risk assessment basis.
- All foods are considered high risk, and all foods are individually assessed (and tested) by FDA as part of MoC’s importer licensing process.
- Border inspection by FDA is limited, and importers could use MITS to inspect and sample import consignments or could sample themselves under Customs supervision and submit samples to FDA on arrival for testing and screening. FDA expressed that MITS has ISO 9000 accreditation and is in the process of gaining ISO 17020 accreditation to ensure accuracy and statistical validity of inspection and sampling. Self-managed sampling of imports by importers lacks statistical rigour and, therefore, laboratory analysis and safety checks would likely be less accurate.
- Inspection services at land border checkpoints are limited, and the majority of imports bypass these checkpoints. For food passing through the border checkpoint, inspection is most often paper-based and consists simply of a check that the product listed in the documentation is on the list of approved foods provided by FDA (based on the FDA pre-licensing assessment of food products to be imported).

3. Critical issues raised by Livestock Breeding and Veterinary Department Laboratories

Discussions with the Livestock Breeding and Veterinary Department laboratories raised the following concerns:

- Laboratory capacity is limited for testing imports. There are regional laboratories funded by donors but these often are directed to test export commodities destined for donor countries. The laboratory systems are generally department-specific and are not shared across different departments or ministries that are examining domestic, imported or export food and related products.
- Fees are applicable to laboratory testing of food and livestock imports but these are nominal and do not cover the true cost of testing.
- The capacity of on-arrival quarantine for plants and animals is best developed around Yangon, and is absent at many of the land border checkpoints. Statutory fees are in place for on-arrival quarantine but these are nominal and do not cover the true cost of such services.
- In many cases, import consignments of particularly fish and poultry, as well as livestock are released to the importer under direction to hold the stock in quarantine for the statutory period and report any disease issues. There is, however, no follow-up to ensure that this is done. This is the common practice at land border posts where there is no government quarantine facility.
- There is significant leakage through land border checkpoints, and a considerable amount of low-cost stock from poor health sources is imported through this route.

4. Critical issues raised by the Myanmar Livestock Association

The Myanmar Livestock Association raised the following issues in relation to imports:

- As Myanmar moves to an open-market-driven economy, production in Myanmar faces significant challenges. In many sectors, production is not keeping pace with demand and so imports make up the shortfall.
- Underdeveloped infrastructure and production systems mean that Myanmar must invest and modernize in order to be competitive. For example, the unstable electricity supply limits some sectors' capacity to adopt intensive production practices (e.g. poultry and eggs).
- Most livestock sectors are highly cost-sensitive because of low incomes in Myanmar. The market for high-cost imports (such as from the European Union or the United States) is, therefore, very limited.
- Local costs of production have the capacity to be competitive, but tight controls over land use and a reliance on traditional mixed farming practices mean that uptake and adoption of more modern intensive production systems is slow.
- Initial shifts to intensive production were successful because of the low prevalence of infectious diseases in Myanmar, but managing the health status of animals under intensive production is raising costs and impacting on the financial viability of some producers.
- In some sectors, adoption of intensive production has seen production outstrip demand, resulting in falling commodity prices and impacting on farm viability.
- For imports, the low value of food on the market means that often the foods being illegally imported are poor quality and poor health status products.

- Domestic marketing and distribution chains are underdeveloped and largely reflect traditional local and “wet” markets.¹
- Import and export infrastructures such as bulk handling facilities are limiting the scope and capacity for Myanmar to gain export markets.

5. Critical issues raised by the Myanmar Fisheries Association

The Fisheries Association raised the following issues:

- Importation of fish feed for aquaculture represents a major concern for disease control.
- Illegal importation of low-cost fish fry for aquaculture represents a risk to domestic fish stock, as does aquaculture development if disease issues are not managed at the source and in post-arrival quarantine.
- Cost factors mean that importers will import illegally to avoid the 5% tax and so increase profitability.
- Aquaculture in Myanmar is largely underdeveloped. Traditional aquaculture has low stocking rates and minimal management or feeding, but the demand is outstripping production capacity and it is recognized that more intensive aquaculture is needed.
- The Fisheries Association is strengthening tertiary training to assist in developing the sector.

6. Summary of the critical issues raised in consultations

The agenda for the consultations included opportunities for discussions and the identification of areas where improvements could be made. Major issues regarding pre-border and border activities raised at each of the consultations are presented at Tables 1 and 2 for Yangon, and Tables 3 and 4 for Nay Pyi Taw.

Table 1. Major issues with pre-border activities raised during the consultation in Yangon, 7 November 2017.

Sr. No	Department/ Organization	Pre-border activities
1.	Myanmar Investment Commission	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Only one window for investor <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build factory (food industry) • Safety (Ministry of Commerce (MoC) is not the decision maker on food safety) 2. Ask FDA (Ministry of Health) for recommendation 3. Give Customs clearance to relevant ministries
2.	Directorate of Trade, MoC	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. New consumer protection law was submitted to Parliament 2. Definition <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Illegal trade: importing non-permitted commodity • Informal trade: unofficial importation of permitted commodity

¹ A wet market is one that sells live animals (poultry, fish, reptiles and mammals) in an open environment, or that sells fresh meat and fish in the open; the floors and surroundings are often routinely sprayed and washed with water, to the extent of flooding it at several intervals, giving the wet markets their name. If hygiene standards are not maintained and there is failure to observe sanitation, wet markets may help spread disease and become a source of influenza viruses and other infectious disease agents for human beings. Daily introduction of new animals provides favourable conditions for the development of disease agents such as influenza.

3.	Plant Quarantine, Department of Agriculture (DoA), Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation (MoALI)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Issue plant clearance and import clearance in line with International Standards for Phytosanitary Measures 2. Need pest risk analysis information from exporting countries for importation of agri-commodities 3. Inspect imported agri-commodities by Myanmar Automated Cargo Clearance System (MACCS) developed by Customs under the Japan International Cooperation Agency project 4. Plant quarantine law was enacted on 16 June 1993. New plant quarantine law was amended and submitted to Parliament
4.	DoF, MoALI	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Procedure for importing fishery products require the following information/documentation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health certificate • Sanitary certificate • Country of origin 2. Issue the recommendation to MoC 3. How to distribute on domestic market?
5.	Livestock Breeding and Veterinary Department, Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation (MoALI)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Importer needs to submit the certification on meat quality, country of origin, biosecurity level of storage and wet market 2. Copy of veterinary health certificate issued by the veterinarian authority of the exporting country 3. Need avian influenza-free certificate from exporting country for chicken meat, duck meat and turkey meat

Table 2. Major issues with border activities raised during the consultation in Yangon, 7 November 2017.

Sr. No	Department/ Organization	Border activities
1.	Plant Quarantine, Department of Agriculture (DoA), MoALI	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Regulation and guidelines were submitted to Parliament 2. Their lab, supported by FAO project, has special facilities for testing edible oils 3. Capacity development for staff and improvement of lab are needed 4. Networking among labs is required
2.	DoF, MoALI	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. No quarantine facilities for fish products 2. Samples are collected by importer 3. Manual or SOPs being developed under the FAO TDP-GIZ project 4. Limited number and capacity of inspection team members
3.	Myawaddy District, Livestock Breeding and Veterinary Department, Ministry of Agriculture,	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Limited quarantine facilities 2. Officially imported livestock are released when rapid test for influenza A is negative 3. Impossible to hold or quarantine imported livestock 21 days, especially broilers 4. Informal trading is about nine times larger than official at Myawaddy checkpoint

	Livestock and Irrigation, MoALI	
4.	Customs	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Good relations with line ministries 2. Allow related department to take a sample, and hold under seal 3. Release imported commodities after receiving the agreement of related department
5.	Myanmar Inspection and Testing Service	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Lack of SOPs for sampling and testing 2. Sampling should be done by third party 3. Complex demarcation among stakeholders

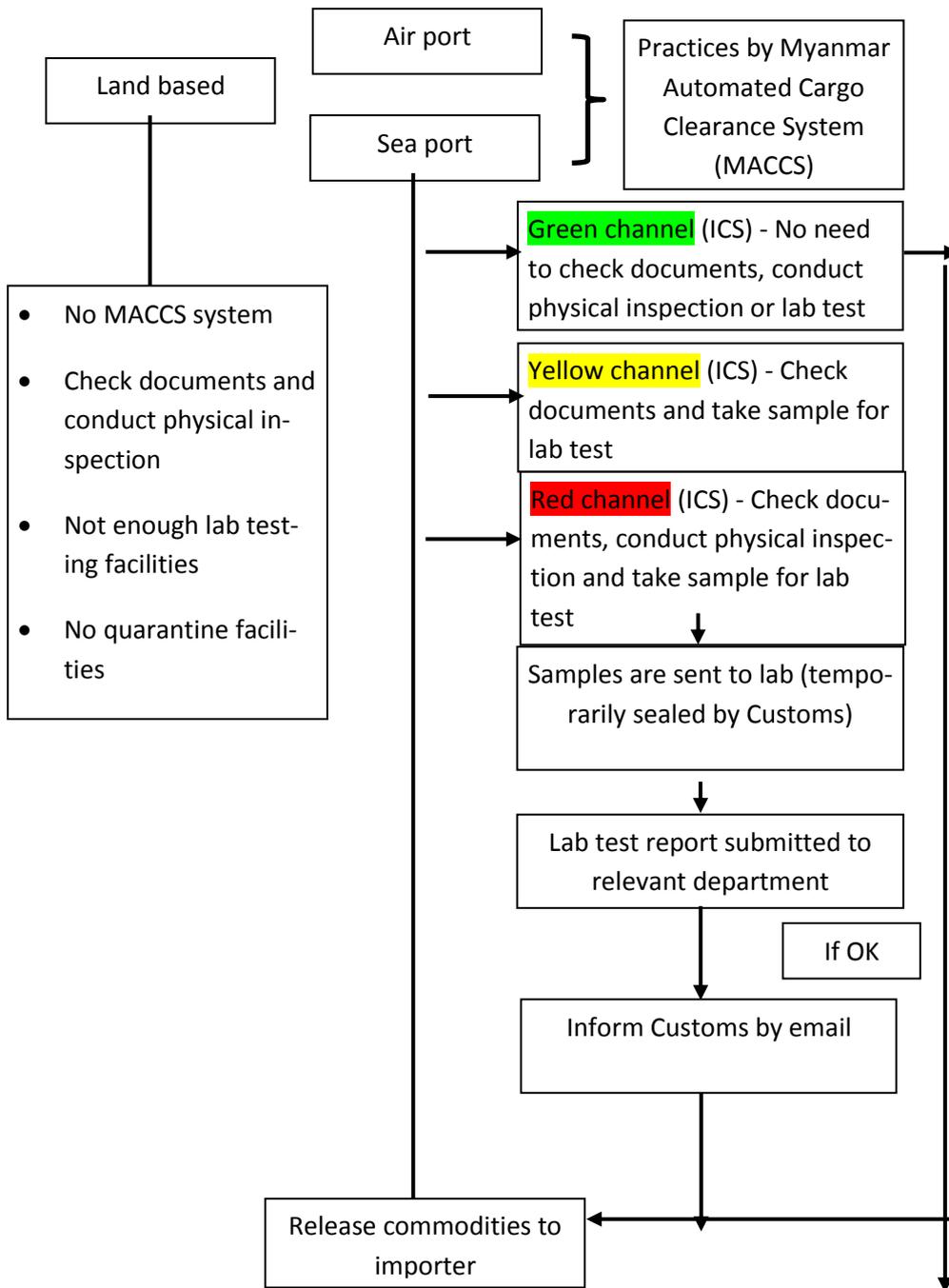
Table 3. Major issues with pre-border activities raised during the consultation in Nay Pyi Taw, 9 November 2017.

Sr. No	Department/ Organization	Pre-border activities
1.	Group discussion	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Priority list based on demand and risk 2. Commitment for keeping the imported food or animal in quarantine until lab results are obtained. 3. Collaboration and coordination of lab facilities (technique, infrastructure) 4. Accelerate and/or promote public awareness on rules, regulations and SOPs 5. Encourage the use of a product labelling system 6. Add risk-based imported food control system to Traceability Data Pool <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to adopt good traceability system between importer and concerned departments

Table 4. Major issues with border activities raised during the consultation in Nay Pyi Taw, 9 November 2017.

Sr. No	Department/ Organization	Border activities
1.	Group discussion	See diagram 1
2.	Muse District, Livestock Breeding and Veterinary Department, Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation, Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Animal and animal products are not officially allowed for importation, and are destroyed if illegally imported 2. Samples are taken from officially imported veterinary drug and feed additive and sent to Yangon veterinary assay lab 3. Illegal or informal trading is greater than official trading
3.	Department of Consumer Affairs, Ministry of Commerce	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Quarantine facilities, warehouse and cold store facilities need to be set up. 2. Skilful manpower to be assigned at border inspection posts (inspector and lab personnel) 3. Updated information on border controls and results to traders needs to be provided for transparency 4. Laboratory testing facilities need to be improved 5. One-stop services for testing laboratories from different departments need to be provided

Diagram 1. Importation protocols.



Annex. List of participants

Yangon consultation, 7 November 2017

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Nay Pyi Taw consultation, 9 November 2017

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