



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

Meeting summary report

**Stakeholder consultation on strengthening national capacity
for risk-based food import control
within One Health framework in Sri Lanka**

30 November 2017
Colombo, Sri Lanka

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

Meeting summary report

**Stakeholder consultation on strengthening national capacity
for risk-based food import control
within One Health framework in Sri Lanka**

30 November 2017
Colombo, Sri Lanka

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

Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific
Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
Bangkok, 2018

The designations employed and the presentation of material in this information product do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) concerning the legal or development status of any country, territory, city or area or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries. The mention of specific companies or products of manufacturers, whether or not these have been patented, does not imply that these have been endorsed or recommended by FAO in preference to others of a similar nature that are not mentioned.

The views expressed in this information product are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of FAO.

© FAO, 2018

FAO encourages the use, reproduction and dissemination of material in this information product. Except where otherwise indicated, material may be copied, downloaded and printed for private study, research and teaching purposes, or for use in non-commercial products or services, provided that appropriate acknowledgement of FAO as the source and copyright holder is given and that FAO's endorsement of users' views, products or services is not implied in any way.

All requests for translation and adaptation rights, and for resale and other commercial use rights should be made via www.fao.org/contact-us/licence-request or addressed to copyright@fao.org.

FAO information products are available on the FAO website (www.fao.org/publications) and can be purchased through publications-sales@fao.org.

Abstract

The consultation meeting “Strengthening national capacity for risk-based food import control within a One Health Framework” was held on 30 November 2017 at Galle Face Hotel, Colombo, Sri Lanka. The main objective of the consultation was to validate the information presented in the draft report entitled “National situation of imported food controls in Sri Lanka”, and to identify the priority actions to be considered while developing a roadmap for effective risk-based imported food control in the country. Thirty-two participants attended the consultation, including high-level officials from imported food control-relevant government agencies, stakeholder groups and resource people, provided input during the plenary and group discussions following the presentation of the national situation report. Group discussions were held on four focus areas: Sri Lanka Customs, Plant Quarantine, Animal Quarantine and Sri Lanka Standards Institution. Requirements identified by the Customs Department included improving the Customs database so that information can be shared with all of the relevant stakeholders, and establishing an alert system for high-risk foods. Plant and animal quarantine groups stated the need for upgrading laboratory capacities (both technical and human), strengthening pre-border requirements with required certificates, and providing guidance on the approval of certain commodities. Requirements required by the Sri Lanka Standards Institution included improving existing regulations and standards to address globally emerging food safety issues, conducting risk-based country profiling, setting up a unit for surveillance and import trade analysis, improving communication mechanisms by establishing information sharing systems among stakeholders on the results of the sample analysis and certification systems. In order to strengthen the existing imported food control system, immediate actions based on these requirements are recommended and include: 1) organizing training sessions on risk categorization for food safety competent authorities, quarantine officers and custom officials; and 2) ensuring the use of a risk categorization list, developing standard operating procedures for sampling and inspection at the borders and organizing training sessions on imported food inspection for relevant officials; and 4) developing a single-window, information-sharing system among relevant agencies and importers. A roadmap for effective risk-based imported food control in Sri Lanka has been drafted, and a consultation with relevant high-level stakeholder representatives to validate and agree on the roadmap is suggested as a next step.

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

Contents

Abstract.....	iii
Acknowledgements.....	vi
Abbreviations and acronyms	vii
Overview	1
1. Objectives of the stakeholder consultation.....	1
2. Methodology.....	1
3. Common requirements identified by all groups.....	1
4. Specific requirements identified by each group.....	2
4.1 Sri Lanka Customs	2
4.2 Plant Quarantine.....	2
4.3 Animal Quarantine.....	2
4.4 Sri Lanka Standards Institution	2
5. Final output of the consultation	3
6. Conclusion and recommendations	6
Annex. List of participants	7

Acknowledgements

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) would like to express its appreciation to the people who provided valuable input during the preparation of this report. The report was drafted by Niranjana Rajapakse (FAO consultant), under the FAO project “Strengthening national capacity for risk-based food import control within a One Health framework, SP4 One Health Project 2017”, coordinated by Masami Takeuchi, Food Safety Officer (FAO) under the overall guidance of Sridhar Dharmapuri, Senior Food Safety and Nutrition Officer of FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (FAORAP). Contributions provided by participants as well as by Roshini Gunaratne (FAO Sri Lanka) and Gokce Akbalik (FAORAP) are gratefully acknowledged. The document has been technically edited by Kim Des Rochers.

Abbreviations and acronyms

FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
MRL	maximum residue limits
SLSI	Sri Lanka Standards Institution
SOPs	standard operating procedures
WTO	World Trade Organization

Overview

A one-day national stakeholder consultation on “Strengthening national capacity for risk-based food import control within a One Health Framework” was held on 30 November 2017 at Galle Face Hotel, Colombo, Sri Lanka. Thirty-two participants attended the consultation, including high-level officials from imported food control-related government agencies, stakeholder groups and resource people. The main objectives of the consultation were to validate the information collected and presented in the national situation of imported food control in Sri Lanka, and identify priority actions in order to develop a roadmap for a strategic plan towards effective risk-based imported food control in the country through the presentation of the national situation report and plenary and group discussions.

1. Objectives of the stakeholder consultation

The stakeholder consultation was organized with the primary aim of discussing and validating the information gathered in the national situation report on imported food control in Sri Lanka, with all the stakeholder groups involved (directly or indirectly) in imported food control. Stakeholders identified priority areas that need to be considered and developed a roadmap to strengthen the national capacity for risk-based food import control within a One Health framework.

Specific objectives of the consultation were to:

- complete the information included in the initial mapping of the national import food control system while preparing a comprehensive country profile in the national situation report;
- identify problems, limitations and challenges faced by different government agencies and stakeholder groups involved in the import food control system with regard to their designated responsibilities;
- obtain suggestions for improving the overall coordination among different stakeholder groups in the system to improve the effectiveness of the system; and
- gain a clear focus for the roadmap on how the current system needs to be strengthened to achieve effective imported food control systems.

2. Methodology

A national situation report was used as a source of information for the presentation and for the plenary and group discussions, and was distributed to all participants. Following the presentation of the national situation report, participants were divided into four groups – based on the major stakeholders of the imported food control system – to discuss and propose priority actions for the strategic plan to improve the existing system. The four groups consisted of Sri Lanka Customs, Plant Quarantine, Animal Quarantine and Sri Lanka Standards Institution. (The list of government agencies, stakeholder groups and participants is found in the Annex.)

3. Common requirements identified by all groups

A set of similar requirements were identified by all groups for improving the respective competent authorities’ systems. Common key areas that were highlighted as needing further improvement include:

- Developing and implementing a food safety and quality policy and legislation, including requirements of imported food control.
- Establishing and managing a common, interactive, web-based information communication system for use by all stakeholders of the import food control system, including importers.
- Periodically reviewing and updating the risk food categories, and the overall risk management policy.

- Establishing an effective risk assessment, management and communication network (framework for cross-agency communication) that alerts stakeholders to the risk of imported food at the national and international level.
- Improving the current systems in inspection, sampling and testing, according to the imported food risk category.
- Upgrading laboratory facilities to carry out sample analysis efficiently and accurately.
- Improving human capacity by providing required training.

4. Specific requirements identified by each group

At the end of the group discussions, each group identified the specific requirements for their focus area: Sri Lanka Customs, Plant Quarantine, Animal Quarantine and Sri Lanka Standards Institution.

4.1 Sri Lanka Customs

- Improving the current customs database to identify imported food under a separate category for easy access by relevant stakeholders and providing them with all of the required information.
- Establishing a separate risk management committee for food, and developing a customs alert system for stakeholders.
- Strengthening coordination among enforcement officers such as public health inspectors, food and drug inspectors, veterinary surgeons, Sri Lanka Standards Institution officers, customs officers and others.

4.2 Plant Quarantine

- Facilitating and upgrading the testing facilities.
- Improving the technical capacity of quarantine personnel to handle designated functions.
- Revising and implementing new regulatory requirements to include plants and plant-based food imports.
- Strengthening pre-border requirements (genetically free certificates, toxin free certificates, pre-cool certificates, packaging requirements and other related test reports), and providing guidelines to ease the approval of food products such as potatoes, onions, grains, cereals, pulses, fruits and vegetables and blended teas.

4.3 Animal Quarantine

- Developing human capacity for effective performance related to designated functions.
- Improving laboratory facilities.
- Setting up a new system to overcome unnecessary delays in giving approvals for imported animal-based food.
- Strengthening the pre-border control by identifying reliable and standard certifying bodies for the imported food.

4.4 Sri Lanka Standards Institution

- Revising and developing the regulations and standards to handle globally emerging food safety issues (e.g. hazardous contaminants).
- Implementing facilities to cover regulatory specifications (e.g. testing facilities for genetically modified foods).
- Raising awareness among stakeholders as to how to meet regulatory requirements for importing food.
- Improving the framework for the risk assessment of imported foods.
- Establishing a separate unit to perform surveillance and trend analysis and provide guidance on handling different countries, regions and exporters based on the identified risk category.

- Improving the follow-up steps of sample analysis and certificates, and sharing this information continuously with other relevant groups.
- Strengthening laboratory facilities to ensure timely release of results for decision-making.
- Establishing a traceability and online verification system for imports (pesticide residues, toxins and other reporting hazards) through a common web-based platform in order to work closely with stakeholders to provide an efficient service.
- Strengthening interdepartmental communications on food safety information.
- Developing resource peoples' capacity for rapid implementation of improvements required in the system.

5. Final output of the consultation

Based on inputs on the proposed improvements by stakeholders, short-term (i.e. within 12 months) and long-term actions were identified. Immediate activities are listed in Table 1, while long-term actions are presented in Table 2.

Table 1. Suggested actions to be carried out within 12 months.

Action	Recommended timeframe
1. Hold a stakeholder consultation meeting to develop and agree on a national roadmap and strategic plan towards One Health-oriented, risk-based imported food control systems in Sri Lanka.	May 2018
2. Conduct a training on food safety risk categorization for imported food control for government officials (e.g. food safety competent authority, quarantine and custom officials).	August 2018
3. Draft standard operating procedures (SOPs) for food safety sampling and inspection at borders (food safety competent authority).	December 2018
4. Hold a stakeholder consultation for the food safety competent authority and quarantine and custom officials to develop a single-window system (a common information-sharing, IT-based platform, with regard to imported food) that incorporates harmonized system codes for the use of risk categorization.	November 2018
5. Draft a food safety risk categorization for imported food control and develop a decision tree (to be done by food safety competent authority).	March 2019
6. Conduct a series of national training sessions for inspection officers on risk-based inspections of imported food for Sri Lanka's food safety competent authority, and quarantine and custom officials.	Initiate planning by March 2019

Table 2. Suggested long-term actions to develop a roadmap for implementation.

Action		Recommended timeframe	Recommended first action
Pre-border control			
1.	Strengthen national food product standards so that they include import food categories, and target specifications of food safety parameters to ensure compliance with international standards (e.g. veterinary drugs, growth promoters, toxins, maximum residue levels for pesticides, and other frequently reported food safety hazards).	12 months	Review existing food standards and identify standards that cover import food products and which need the inclusion of food safety-related specifications.
2.	Develop a single food standard code for exporting foods into Sri Lanka that presents the full technical details of all regulations, standards and/or specifications regarding food in a logical, easy-to-follow manner that enables faster approval and better compliance.	24–36 months	Review current code and identify needed improvements
3.	Improve the availability of information for importers on procedural requirements (other than technical specifications) in importing foods, by improving relevant institutional websites for government agencies (e.g. Customs, Sri Lanka Standards Institution, Food Control Administration Unit, Plant Quarantine and others).	12 months	i) Hold a stakeholder consultation to develop a single-window information sharing system, ii) development a webpage to share information
4.	Develop pre-border agreements with exporting countries and regions to ensure compliance with national specifications, and alignment with WTO requirements. Options to be considered include the adoption of electronic certification for sanitary and phytosanitary purposes.	18 months	Develop agreements
5.	Accept test reports only from accredited laboratories for import clearance of food products of both plant and animal origin, and develop an understanding and agreement with exporting countries and regions to communicate these requirements.	12 months	Identify suitable accredited laboratories in respective countries
6.	Record the issues and risks associated with imports. These risks need to be statistically analyzed to understand trends, and should be shared among stakeholder groups to assist with appropriate actions and decision-making.	12 months	Food safety risk categorization and decision tree draft for imported food controls
7.	Streamline import clearance procedures with the adoption of a risk and performance-based approach. To do so, imports should be categorized based on their food safety risk and importers should be categorized by their compliance history. In order to implement this import control measure, a surveillance and recording system needs to be developed with the support of Customs and other operating groups.	24 months	Draft a food safety risk categorization and decision tree for imported food controls
Border control			
8.	Share risks associated with regions among stakeholder groups for appropriate risk-based controlling activities and to ensure that Customs works collaboratively with responsible domestic departments for the clearance of goods.	12–18 months	Collect information on incidences from exporting country resources and international resources

9.	Improve import food regulations by updating imported food inspection schemes, thereby giving emphasis to the existing global situation with regard to food safety hazards.	24 months	Review existing standards to identify where updates are needed
10.	Conduct national training sessions for inspection officers on risk-based inspections and immediate preparedness. In practice, inspectors from government ministries – the Ministry of Health, Department of Agriculture, Department of Animal Production and Health, Sri Lanka Standards Institution and Department of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources – should work alongside custom officers in the clearance of imports.	12–24 months	Plan a two-year training schedule
11.	Test the capacity improvement of government analytical laboratories, and animal and plant quarantine laboratories based on surveillance data. Because most laboratories do not participate in proficiency testing or inter-laboratory testing, recommendations for decision-making have the potential to become problematic.	18–24 months	Study the current situation of the testing laboratories with regard to available facilities (instrumental and human resources), mandate, management structure and procedure of sample receipt and issuing of reports, problems and improvements needed.
12.	Establish common protocols and procedures for testing imported foods in government analytical laboratories through a common laboratory manual that contains directions on sampling requirements, references to test methods (internationally accepted), calibration requirements, and handling and maintaining sample integrity to prevent cross contamination or deterioration such that the validity of test results are compromised. All laboratories (government or private) engaged in testing foods should be brought under a national laboratory management and networking system.	10 months	Draft standard operating procedures (SOPs)
13.	Regularly monitor compliance (including labeling and distributor details), using a random sampling basis, with high-risk foods being checked more regularly and low-risk foods less frequently.	10 months	Draft SOPs
14.	Bring all laboratories engaged in testing, whether government or private, under a national laboratory management and networking system. Test data need to be accessed by decision-making bodies (especially the Food Control Administration Unit) on a regular basis.	12–24 months	Conduct a stakeholder consultation to discuss the findings of No. 11 and to seek the possibility of developing a national laboratory management and network system
Post-border control			
15.	Train food inspectors, public health institutes and officials from the consumer affairs authority in adopting a risk and performance-based monitoring system of available imported foods based on national requirements and specifications.	12 months	Plan a two-year training schedule

6. Conclusion and recommendations

Overall, the import food control system in Sri Lanka is adequately developed and operates at a satisfactory level. Over time, the increasing volumes of imported foods – together with the diversification of food origins and growing complexity of the technologies used for food manufacturing – have emphasized the global need to revise the approaches in import food control. Thus, considering global food safety scenario, there is scope for Sri Lanka to further streamline and improve the effectiveness of procedures in order to protect the health of consumers from food safety threats associated with emerging food-based hazards following a risk-based approach. The specific actions that need to be carried out to strengthen the system have been identified in this report as have the outcome of the stakeholder consultation. Further analysis is needed to identify the timeframe for the roadmap, taking into account the existing administrative structure of the import food control system.

Annex. List of participants

The list of government agencies and stakeholder groups participated in the consultation

1. Department of Commerce
2. Sri Lanka Standards Institution
3. Department of Import and Export Control
4. Sri Lanka Export Development Board
5. Ceylon Chamber of Commerce
6. Food Control Administration Unit, Ministry of Health and Nutrition
7. Ministry of Health and Nutrition
8. Sri Lanka Customs
9. Institute of Postharvest Technology
10. Food quality control notified/referral laboratories
11. Government Analyst Department
12. Sri Lanka Food Processors Association
13. Department of Export Agriculture
14. Department of Animal Production and Health
15. Coconut Development Authority
16. Animal Quarantine Office
17. National Plant Quarantine Service
18. Consumer Affairs Authority
19. Department of Fisheries
20. Office of the pesticide registrar

List of participants

Nr	Name	Position	Affiliation	Email
1.	Chandima Kiriwandala	Deputy Director	Department of Commerce	chandima@doc.gov.lk
2.	Dayani Yapa	Senior Deputy Director	Sri Lanka Standards Institution	dayani@slsi.lk
3.	E.N.K Vidyalankara	Assistant Controller	Department of Import and Export Control	Kumudinimen@gmail.com
4.	Thilini Upadya Himala Gunasekara	Assistant Director	Sri Lanka Export Development Board	Upadya@edb.gov.lk
5.	Chalindra Pathirana	Representative	Ceylon Chamber of Commerce	chalindrapathirana@gmail.com
6.	R.D. Sumanawatan	Food And Drug Inspector	Food Control Administration Unit	sumanawatanrd@gmail.com
7.	J.K. Jayasinghe	Assistant Director	Food Control Administration Unit	kandagejayasingha@gmail.com
8.	D.P. Widerawarata	Food Inspector	Food Control Administration Unit	
9.	E.G.S. Kulasinghe	Food And Drugs Inspector	Food Control Administration Unit	egskulasinghe@yahoo.com
10.	Dedunu Fernando	MO Food Safety	Ministry of Health and Nutrition	

Nr	Name	Position	Affiliation	Email
11.	Sampath Samarawickrama	Marketing and Research Director	Coconut Development Authority	Sampathcda@gmail.com
12.	D.H.K. amBambarandaje	Deputy Director	Sri Lanka Customs	dhkbom@gmail.com
13.	H. Nimal Jayaratne	Superintendent of Customs	Sri Lanka Customs	
14.	C.R. Gunawardam	Research Officer	Institute of Postharvest Technology	
15.	K.G.A. Kumaratunga	Chef Chemist	Food quality control laboratories	Ajith.kumaratunga@yahoo.com
16.	Deepika Senevirathne	Deputy Government Analyst	Government Analyst Department	Depina.anal@gmail.com
17.	Maliak de Alwis	President	Sri Lanka Food Processors Association	
18.	Niranjan Rajapakse	Senior Lecturer	University of Peradeniya	Niranjan.rajapakse@gmail.com
19.	I.V.A.D.C.S. Induruwa	Assistant Director	Department of Export Agriculture	induruwa@yahoo.com
20.	Sadisha Gunathi	Animal Quarantine Officer	Department of Animal Health	sadishagunarathna@yahoo.com
21.	M.Z.M. Farhol	Nss	The United Nations Industrial Development Organization	vinzata@gmail.com
22.	Vilaja Ramyadasa	Assistant Director	Coconut Development Authority	vilajaramyadasa@gmail.com
23.	D.P.V. Sriyalatha	Chief Officer	Animal Quarantine	cagocolombo@sltnet.lk
24.	Chandrika Thilakarathne	Director	Consumer Affairs Authority	chandrikahdn@yahoo.com
25.	A.N.S. Seneviratne	Quality Control Officer	Department of Fisheries	nalikais@gmail.com
26.	Sepalika Wickramasinghe	Deputy Director	Department of Fisheries	doronfard@gmail.com
27.	S Dhanapida	Director	Department of Health and Nutrition	
28.	Roshini Gunaratne	Programme Officer	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations	Roshini.gunaratne@fao.org
29.	I.G.N. Hewajulige	Senior Deputy Director	Industrial Technology Institute of Sri Lanka	ilmi@iti.lk
30.	W.J. Nimanthika	Assistant Director	National Plant Quarantine Service	

Nr	Name	Position	Affiliation	Email
31.	I.K. Warshamana	Deputy Director	National Plant Quarantine Service	
32.	C. Magamag	Assistant Director	Pesticide Registration Office	champamagamag@gmail.com

