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Canada's Approach to Low-Level Presence

FAO Technical Consultation on GM Crops in International Food and Feed Trade

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Canada's Approach to Agricultural Biotechnology



Three key principles:

- Science-based safety assessment role for Government
- Industry leadership in commercialization decisions
- Producer choice in selecting technologies that offer most benefits

Importance of Science-Based Decision Making



- Innovation necessary component to increase agricultural production - essential to alleviate world food security concerns
- Canada promotes use of measures based on scientific evidence to ensure predictability and transparency in trade
- Science-based measures focused on safety critical to supporting innovation
- Avoidance of technical barriers to trade, particularly those based on socio-economic considerations

Adventitious Presence vs Low Level Presence

Adventitious Presence

- research or “pre-commercial” GM crops
- has not been approved anywhere, no food safety assessment completed.

Low Level Presence

- Authorized for food use in at least one country
- Codex-consistent food safety assessment completed

Risk Management

- AP and LLP are different
 - For AP, case-by case approach to assess risks
 - For LLP, food safety has been demonstrated; poses trade issues

LLP: An Emerging Issue

Definition of LLP: unintended presence, at low levels, of GM crops in imported food/feed where the GM crop is authorized for food use in one or more countries but is not authorized in the country of import

Causes:

- Increased commercialization/trade in GM products globally
- Emergence of non-traditional GM crop developers
- More precise testing
- Isolated/asynchronous approvals of GM crops
- Lingering traces of discontinued varieties

As a result: Occurrences of LLP expected to increase in international grain trade

LLP: Implications of Trade Disruption

- Affects both importers and exporters
- Can compromise stable food supply and ability to satisfy domestic demand
- Effects not limited to exports of GM crops
 - LLP can be detected in shipments of non-GM crops

Potential solutions



- Synchronized approvals between exporting and importing countries
- Adoption of pragmatic/risk-based domestic approaches to address situations of LLP in imports
- International approaches to facilitate management of LLP by countries

Current Canadian Approach to Unapproved GM Products

- Case-by-case, risk-based approach
- Any presence of unapproved GM products is considered to be a “regulatory non-compliance”
- Return to compliance required:
 - Risk is evaluated, and
 - Most appropriate intervention to return to compliance is determined
- Compliance can be achieved over time by either:
 - Authorizing the GM product
 - or
 - Removing the product from Canada
- Approach not sufficiently predictable for trade

Review of Canada's LLP Policy

- Objectives:
 - Enhance predictability and transparency in management of LLP
 - Maintain existing rigorous food, feed and environmental safety regulatory frameworks
 - Minimize unnecessary barriers to trade and innovation
- Policy being developed to clarify conditions under which enforcement actions would or would not be taken on imported food and feed
- Work in progress

Relevant fora to discuss LLP

- Given its mission, FAO has a key role to play in the issue of LLP
- Canada has helped to launch the Global LLP Initiative
 - 15 signatory countries so far
 - Acknowledge the impact of LLP on trade
 - Agree to collaborate and consider global solutions
- Other international fora:
 - Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC)
 - Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)
 - Codex Alimentarius Commission
 - Interamerican Institute for Cooperation in Agriculture

Path forward



- Discussing LLP is about addressing a practical trade issue, not about promoting the use of agricultural biotechnology
- Canada strongly supports further discussion to:
 - Identify and characterize the issues
 - Consider possible solutions



Thank you!

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