

IMPORTANCE OF SCIENTIFIC ADVICE BODY – SCIENCE FOR SAFE FOOD¹

Communication from Brazil

The following communication, received on 2 July 2012, is being circulated at the request of the Delegation of Brazil.

1. Scientific principles provide the strongest foundation for establishing and, as appropriate, updating the international standards, guidelines and recommendations. Knowledge, data and resources for improving international processes in order to establish science-based SPS standards in a timely way is of paramount importance for the well-functioning of the multilateral trading system.
2. Scientific advice provides the basis for both national and international food standards and control systems to ensure production of safe food and consumer protection. Additionally, food safety measures improve the sustainability of food supply chains, facilitate trade, and contribute to food security.
3. Recently there has been a marked increase in demand for scientific advice to support food control systems, due to growing complexities in worldwide food production systems and changing consumption patterns, as well as WTO's recognition of Codex standards as the international benchmark for food safety requirements.
4. Governments are charged with the task of developing food policies to ensure the food we eat is safe and of adequate quality. FAO/WHO scientific advice bodies provide an essential contribution to inform and strengthen decision making processes focused on food safety. The Joint FAO/WHO Expert Committee on Food Additives (JECFA), the Joint FAO/WHO Meeting on Pesticide Residues (JMPR) and the Joint FAO/WHO Expert Meeting on Microbiological Risk Assessment (JEMRA), make available international scientific advice, including risk assessments.
5. Scientific advice affords the necessary basis for international food standards, guidelines and codes of practice developed by the Codex Alimentarius Commission. Moreover, the scientific advice provided by FAO and WHO is also used extensively by national risk managers in charge of food safety and food control activities in Members. Such information supports the decisions of a broad range of actors: government, producers, processors, industry, consumers, researchers, academia and non-governmental organizations.

¹ The FAO's strategy for the provision of scientific advice for food safety and G/SPS/GEN/1143/Rev.2 were used as a basis for this document.

6. Collectively, these actors look for neutral and independent scientific advice regarding food safety standards. The outcomes are of high importance for the international community: improvement of food safety, international standards harmonization, global trade facilitation.

7. Resources have to be allocated for the provision of food-related scientific advice. However, current resources are not sufficient to continue to fully respond in a timely manner with high quality scientific advice. In recent Codex meetings representatives from FAO and WHO reported that the resources dedicated to scientific advice are insufficient to perform the necessary activities and have asked for support by member countries.

8. Taking into account the importance of the scientific advice bodies to provide independent risk assessment as the basis for risk management recommendations, and their contribution to the elaboration of international standards, Members need to join efforts and work together looking for alternatives to provide urgent resources. Brazil encourages all WTO Members to:

- (a) request FAO and WHO to provide enough financial support for regular operations of the JECFA, JMPR, JEMRA;
 - (b) express in different fora the importance of the work of JECFA, JMPR and JEMRA; and
 - (c) find different means of supporting the activities of these committees.
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