



1 March 2019

(19-1211)

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Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures

Original: English

INTERNATIONAL STATEMENT ON LOW LEVEL PRESENCE

COMMUNICATION FROM CANADA

The following communication, received on 28 February 2019, is being circulated at the request of the Delegation of Canada.

1 OVERVIEW

1.1. Consistent with *Codex Alimentarius Commission* guidance, the International Statement on Low Level Presence (LLP) defines LLP as the unintentional presence in grain shipments, at low levels, of a genetically modified (GM) crop that has been approved for food use following the *Codex Alimentarius Commission Guideline for the Conduct of Food Safety Assessment of Foods Derived from Recombinant-DNA Plants* in at least one country, but has not yet been approved by the importing country.

1.2. LLP can give rise to trade disruptions, which, in turn, can impact food security, prices and innovation in both the exporting and importing countries.

1.3. As the number of GM crops developed and traded around the globe is increasing, so is the likelihood of LLP. The Global Low Level Presence Initiative (GLI), created in 2012, and for which Canada serves as Secretariat, is a group of fifteen member countries, both exporting and importing, that have endorsed an International Statement on Low Level Presence and committed to working collaboratively to develop international approaches to manage LLP.

1.4. This statement defines common strategic directions, objectives and intentions on LLP, and has driven the work of the GLI.

1.5. For further information, please contact the GLI Secretariat at aafc.globallpinitiative-initiativeglobalesurlapfc.aac@canada.ca.

2 TEXT OF THE "INTERNATIONAL STATEMENT ON LOW LEVEL PRESENCE" (VANCOUVER, CANADA, 22 MARCH 2012)

2.1. The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization recently indicated that global agricultural production would need to increase by 70 percent by 2050 in order to meet the rising international food demand. However, significant constraints, such as limited access to arable land and fresh water will affect countries' ability to increase production. Given this reality, the increase in agriculture production would need to come from an increase in productivity. To this regard, biotechnology is going to play a critical role.

2.2. In addition to helping address food security challenges, biotechnology would assist in mitigating climate change impacts by, for example, supporting agricultural practices that could improve sustainable and efficient agriculture.

2.3. Today, the number and complexity of genetically engineered crops being developed and cultivated worldwide is increasing annually. This situation threatens to increase the number of asynchronous and asymmetric approvals worldwide and, consequently, increase the risk of trade

disruptions resulting from the low level presence (LLP) of unapproved events in commercial channels. Reducing asynchronous approvals is the most effective way of reducing trade disruptions due to LLP. However, there is an immediate need to address the risk to trade arising from LLP occurrences, a risk that impacts importing and exporting countries alike, and global food security in general.

2.4. Recognizing the need for action, we, importing and exporting countries, have decided to discuss the issue of LLP; exchange information on its origin and potential implications on the agricultural trading system; and begin the development of an approach or set of approaches to manage LLP internationally.

2.5. We recognize the importance of developing practical approaches for the management of LLP that are science-based, predictable and transparent, and that will encourage the use of international science-based guidelines on LLP, such as the Codex Alimentarius Annex 3: Food Safety Assessment in Situations of Low-Level Presence of Recombinant-DNA Plant Material in Food.

2.6. We recognize that the approaches could be implemented on a voluntary basis by countries. *Therefore, we, importing and exporting countries have decided to:*

- *Work* collaboratively on the issue of LLP to facilitate international trade of agriculture commodities by developing practical approaches, designed to address LLP globally;
 - *Define*, for the purpose of this initiative, LLP for food as low levels of recombinant-DNA plant materials that have passed a food safety assessment according to the Codex Guideline for the Conduct of Food Safety Assessment of Foods Derived from Recombinant-DNA Plants (CAC/GL 45-2003) in one or more countries, but may on occasion be present in food in importing countries in which the food safety of the relevant recombinant-DNA plants has not been determined;
 - *Work* to ensure that the approaches include both food and feed;
 - *Continue* to work collaboratively to address the overarching problem of asynchronous approvals, while working to mitigate the impact of LLP situations;
 - *Work* collaboratively to address the risk of trade disruptions resulting from LLP in order to facilitate international trade of agriculture commodities by developing an approach or approaches, designed to facilitate the management of LLP globally;
 - *Recognize* that LLP of unapproved seed in commercial channels is also a challenge to seed trade and that it also requires collaborative efforts to address. Further collaborative efforts on seed through this initiative should be informed by the work being currently undertaken by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) in this area;
 - *Assure* that these practical approaches do not compromise human, animal, and plant health and safety;
 - *Facilitate* the timely and continued exchange of information on domestic policies related to LLP; and
 - *Continue* to implement the *International Workplan on Low Level Presence* which structures our collaborative actions leading to the development of practical approaches to reduce international trade risks related to LLP, with a view to have Ministers considering the endorsement of an approach or a set of approaches designed to facilitate the global management of LLP.
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