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Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures

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APEC MAXIMUM RESIDUE LIMITS (MRLS) HARMONIZATION WORKSHOP SUMMARY

SUBMISSION BY AUSTRALIA, CANADA, THE PHILIPPINES AND THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

The following document, received on 3 March 2021, is being circulated at the request of the Delegations of Australia, Canada, the Philippines, and the United States of America.

1.1. On 16-17 December 2020, the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) economies held a virtual workshop to discuss best practices on maximum residue limits (MRL) compliance and to build support for a like-minded approach throughout the Pacific Rim to address trade challenges related to the lack of MRL harmonization. The virtual workshop titled, "Pesticide Maximum Residue Limits (MRLs) Harmonization: A Trade Facilitative Approach to MRL Compliance," was attended by thirteen APEC economies including Australia, Canada, Chile, China, Indonesia, Malaysia, New Zealand, the Philippines, Singapore, South Korea, Chinese Taipei, Thailand, and the United States.

1.2. The workshop included presentations from experts across the Pacific Rim on: the impact of MRL violations compliance issues on regional food security and trade, including recent trends following the COVID-19 crisis; the role of import tolerance-setting and transition periods in avoiding MRL compliance issues; how risk-based inspection systems can simultaneously facilitate trade and support greater MRL compliance; how post-border market surveillance programs can inform border priorities; and an update on APEC regional harmonization efforts. A second workshop will be held in June 2021.

1.3. As next steps, APEC economies will work together to produce a best practice guide on MRL regulatory approaches, including effective management transition periods that protect food safety and minimize negative trade effects. A regional initiative to share more information about MRL compliance issues will also be undertaken.

1.4. This workshop builds on previous APEC investments to strengthen technical capacities around MRLs, including those reported to this Committee through [G/SPS/GEN/1746](#) regarding the "APEC Import MRL Guideline for Pesticides: A Guideline on Possible Approaches to Achieve Alignment of International MRLs". Given the potential of pesticide MRLs to serve as non-tariff barriers to trade, APEC engagement in this area is both timely and relevant, and APEC economies welcome use of technical materials developed through APEC activities by countries outside the APEC economies.

1.5. As SPS Committee Members will recall, one of the recommendations adopted in the Fifth Review states, *"The Committee welcomes efforts by Members and the relevant observer organizations to provide regular updates to the Committee on their activities on MRLs, including updates on regional initiatives on MRLs. The Committee notes that such information could provide the basis for other Members to implement similar activities at the national and regional levels to improve harmonization to Codex MRLs, as well as to regional MRLs, where no Codex standards exist, in order to facilitate trade."*

1.6. As active Members of APEC, we are pleased to share this work with Members of the WTO SPS Committee, and we will keep the Committee updated as this work continues.
