



11 November 2019

(19-7658)

Page: 1/2

Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures

Original: English

**APEC IMPORT MRL GUIDELINE FOR PESTICIDES: A GUIDELINE ON POSSIBLE  
APPROACHES TO ACHIEVE ALIGNMENT OF INTERNATIONAL MRLS**

COMMUNICATION FROM AUSTRALIA

The following communication, received on 8 November 2019, is being circulated at the request of the Delegation of Australia.

1. Australia would like to take the opportunity to draw to members attention the APEC Import MRL Guideline for Pesticides: A Guideline on Possible Approaches to Achieve Alignment of International MRLS. The guideline has been discussed positively in recent non-tariff measures workshops and is particularly relevant to Members of this Committee given the focus on pesticides, their regulation and the potential of MRLs to be non-tariff barriers to trade.
2. The guideline is intended to facilitate a greater degree of clarity and alignment around the application of assessment methodologies involved in considering import MRL requests, from the perspective of consumer protection, across the APEC region. The aim is to not only increase consumer confidence in the MRL setting process, but where practical and appropriate, also achieve greater regulatory convergence of MRLs, promoting greater alignment with international standards, while reducing the regulatory burden across APEC economies and facilitating trade.
3. APEC agreements are non-binding on APEC economies. The guideline is meant to be used on a voluntary basis, as an aid for APEC economies when considering the alignment of domestic pesticide MRLs of plant protection products, with relevant international or regional standards (e.g. Codex) or with an exporting country's MRLs. The overall objective is to provide a coherent framework within which APEC economies can identify the minimum dataset, to the extent necessary, upon which to assess a request for pesticide import MRLs where health-based guidance values, authorised use patterns and MRLs have been established, either internationally or in the exporting economy.
4. The guideline is intended to also create opportunities to share relevant residue trial data and information across the APEC region. The guideline provides an outline of the processes that could be followed when evaluating MRL alignment. It is not intended to cover pesticides that are banned or restricted in the importing economy.
5. Each economy in the APEC region has developed its own regulatory system aimed at protecting the environment, public and consumer health, resulting in significant diversity in regulatory policies and approaches towards pesticide MRL setting, compliance and recognition.
6. Trade in food, across the APEC region, can be severely disrupted when non-compliance with importing economy standards occurs. Such non-compliance can be due to MRL disparities arising either from MRLs based on differing use patterns (Good Agricultural Practices, GAP) or the absence of a MRL in an importing economy. Dealing with such breaches can be problematic, particularly where there may be no public health concerns over potential food safety.
7. To assist in minimizing such discrepancies and facilitate trade, while continuing to protect human health from potential pesticide risks, the APEC food safety cooperation forum developed a guidance document on approaches to achieve alignment of MRLs for pesticides within APEC.

8. The primary benefit of the guidance is the development of a convergent regulatory approach, based on agreed principles that would allow economies to balance their regulatory needs with the goal of facilitating trade. Other important benefits include providing communication contacts with relevant APEC economy practitioners and increased opportunities for cooperation, collaboration and work sharing.

9. The guideline is available from the APEC website:

<https://www.APEC.org/publications/2016/08/import-MRL-guideline-for-pesticides>.

---