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Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures

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## FAO SUBMISSION ON FOOD SAFETY RISK ANALYSIS

MEETING OF 25-27 MARCH 2015

The following communication, received on 25 March 2015, is being circulated at the request of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).

1. FAO has taken note of the document submitted by the United States of America on "Risk Assessment: Possible Steps for consideration" (G/SPS/GEN/1401) and in particular the encouragement at the end of the paper for the SPS Committee to collaborate with the international bodies working in the area of risk assessment, notably FAO, WHO, Codex, OIE and IPPC.

2. To facilitate this, FAO would like to take the opportunity to provide some additional information on some of its work in the area of SPS capacity development, especially in the area of food safety risk analysis.

- a. FAO is very aware of the need to improve sharing of information on risk assessments. In recent years, FAO has been very active in the development of the GM-Foods platform, which is a simple online platform to share information on safety assessment of foods derived from recombinant-DNA plants authorized in accordance with the relevant Codex guidelines.

FAO is actively encouraging and working with countries to share their assessment information in this area, and has gained important experiences in the challenges and benefits of promoting greater information sharing. While FAO's current engagement is in the area of GM Foods, if there was a strong interest in expanding the scope of such a platform to cover other food safety related risk assessments, this is something FAO would be willing to consider.

- b. In the area of development of capacities at country level, FAO recognizes that there are many modalities possible depending on existing levels of capacity and that it is important to match these to the needs of each individual country. FAO, together with other partners (such as the WHO), has an ongoing program of work in the area of food safety risk analysis. In this context, all the risk assessments developed at international level are made publicly available for countries to use as appropriate to their situation. More recently, some hazard specific risk assessment tools have been developed to facilitate up-take of risk assessment at national level. An example is a tool to assess key foodborne pathogens (such as *Salmonella* in poultry). Training and capacity development aimed at enabling countries to implement the risk analysis framework is included in most FAO food safety projects where there is the opportunity to tailor the capacity development approaches to the individual country's needs. These approaches often include mentoring efforts.
- c. On the point of risk communication, FAO, in collaboration with WHO, has recently developed a handbook and training resource on "Risk communication applicable to food safety" (currently available in English, French and Spanish). This handbook serves as both a training tool and a resource for food safety risk communication. In the last year, successful pilot testing and training has been implemented in Europe/Central Asia and in Africa with further events planned for the coming year. In this regard, FAO is working with EFSA to implement further training in the European region.

3. Through the STDF and other partnerships, FAO continues to work to promote better coordination of food safety capacity development efforts – including the area of food safety risk analysis. FAO is keen to be involved in any discussions on strengthening countries capacities in risk analysis to ensure that approaches are as streamlined as possible to maximize efficiency and impact.

**Additional information:**

4. FAO GM-Foods platform can be accessed on <http://www.fao.org/food/food-safety-quality/gm-foods-platform/en/>.

5. FAO undertakes food safety risk assessments together with WHO on chemical, microbiological as well as on emerging and cross cutting food safety issues. Details of the scientific advice programme and the key expert committees, notably the Joint Expert Committee on Food Additives – JECFA (covering food additives, contaminants and veterinary drugs in food) and JEMRA (microbiological hazards in foods) can be found on <http://www.fao.org/food/food-safety-quality/scientific-advice/en/>.

6. Some of the recent tools which have been developed to support risk assessment and risk management, including the development of microbiological criteria and the sampling plans for mycotoxins, can be found on <http://www.fstools.org/>.

7. The risk communication material is currently in press and will be publicly available within the next months.

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