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Working Party on the Accession of Timor-Leste

ACCESSION OF TIMOR-LESTE

ACTION PLAN FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SANITARY AND PHYTOSANITARY (SPS) AGREEMENT

The following submission, dated 21 May 2021, is being circulated at the request of the Delegation of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste.

Strategies	Objectives and Outcomes	Responsible Ministries	Performance Indicators	Timeframe ¹
Strategy 1	1.1. Institutionalization of food control			
Establish a centralised food	- Establish a functional Food Control System to be responsible for and coordinate food control activities in the country with capacity to undertake the	MoH, MAF, MTCI, AIFAESA ²	- New nationally coordinated Food Control System established and operational based on single or multi-agency models supported by	Years 1-3
control system and regulatory framework:	following to international best practice: • Risk assessment – sanitary and		appropriate legislation	
1. Establish new or strengthen existing	phytosanitary; • Quarantine and biosecurity inspection and certification;			
ministries with food related responsibility;	 Sample collection and analysis by an accredited, newly established modern national food laboratory; Develop SPS control measures; 			
2. Combine and/or centralize food control responsibilities between MAF, MoH, MTCI and AIFAESA;	 Develop SPS policy and legislation; Establish relevant and appropriate enforcement, monitoring and evaluation activities; Develop scientific and technical expertise and training capabilities as a critical priority. 			
3. Clarify responsibilities for food control across	- Two options depending on political appetite: 1. Establish a new single Food Control Agency Model		Single or Integrated Multi-Agency Food	Years 1-2
the Government; and 4. Establish new or	within one ministry; OR 2. Establish an Integrated Multi Agency Food Control		Control Model established and operational with clear responsibilities institutionalized by legislation	
strengthen existing infrastructure	Model using existing ministries – MoH, MAF, MTCI, AIFAESA.			V1.2
	- Clarify each ministry's responsibility under Multi- Agency Model (e.g. MoH, MAF, MTCI, AIFAESA) and remove food control responsibilities and activities from other current ministries (MoF, MoE, etc) to avoid confusion and foster collaboration.			Years 1-2
	- Promote collaboration and cooperation between critical Directorates e.g. Quarantine/Biosecurity and			

Short-term: 1-2 years; medium-term: 2-3 years; long-term: 4-5 years.
 MoH (Ministry of Health); MAF (Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries); MTCI (Ministry of Tourism, Commerce and Industry); and AIFAESA (the Inspection and Supervision Authority for Economic, Health and Food Activities).

Strategies	Objectives and Outcomes	Responsible Ministries	Performance Indicators	Timeframe ¹
Establish a National Mechanism for management of all facets of food control and	Veterinary. Appoint Directors with technical background and expertise. Mandate collaboration and share resources, training activities and upskilling.			
dissemination of information	- Establish a National Food Control Management Board or Committee under an appointed experienced Chair, assisted by small Secretariat to coordinate and oversee the implementation of all food control activities across the Government.		 National Food Control Management Board/Committee established. Chair, Secretariat and membership in place and regular meetings operational and documented; 	Years 1-2
- Technical Committees	The National Management Board or Committee should be the national mechanism to publicise and notify all relevant organisations, trade partners and foreign governments of all relevant information on adopted or proposed SPS measures, quarantine and inspection procedures, pesticide tolerances and food safety standards.		 Reports of the meetings prepared and distributed; Regular reports on the achievement of established programme targets. 	
Food Cofeby	This mechanism should include a National Enquiry Point for WTO SPS Measures, Codex Office, ASEAN, OIE and IPPC management. - Establish National Technical Committees		- National Technical Committees established	Years 1-2
- Food Safety Laboratory	responsible to the National Food Control Management Board to coordinate and oversee the development and implementation of activities for sanitary and phytosanitary measures including development of relevant legislation e.g.: • Food Safety Committee (animal health and disease, human health)		and operational; - Supporting legislation approved and in place; - Food, plant and animal safety measures developed and in place.	Years 2-3
	 Plant Pest and Disease Committee Enforcement, Monitoring and Evaluation Committee. 		- National plan for financial feasibility	Years 1
	- Establish a National Food Safety Laboratory: • In short term, combine existing food safety (MoH), quarantine and biosecurity (MAF),			Year 1

Strategies	Objectives and Outcomes	Responsible Ministries	Performance Indicators	Timeframe ¹
	and plant safety (MAF) laboratories in a new facility as start of new National Food Laboratory; In short term, ensure existing laboratory capacity is maintained whilst building new capacity for analysis of plant, animal and human health;		 Skilled staff with education in applied sciences chemistry, microbiology and biology; Records and reports of training on 	Years 1- 2
	 Conduct training workshops for laboratory staff using external providers – foreign governments (e.g. EU, US, Australia), NGOs, World Bank, WHO/FAO, ASEAN, APEC; In medium term, establish new National 		laboratory quality assurance and on analytical methods; - Quality assurance documentation complete.	Years 1-3 Years 2-3
- Quarantine and Inspection facilities - Staff training centres	Food Reference Laboratory in new dedicated facility; Acquire sufficient infrastructure, equipment and trained staff to allow new laboratory to facilitate all country requirements for		Specialised training provided on microbiological and chemical analysis	Years 1-2
Centres	human food, plant and animal health and safety, and working towards international best practice and accreditation – internal (Government) and external funding (Foreign governments, NGOs, World Bank); • Provide specialized, hands-on training on microbiological and chemical parameters according to the specific needs of the laboratory;		-ISO 17025 accreditation for selected chemical and microbiological parameters; -Participation in inter-laboratory comparisons; -Laboratory reports;	Years 1-4
Develop standards	 Achieve ISO 17025 accreditation for microbiology and chemical parameters; Provide services to private sector. 		-Feedback from "users" of laboratory services.	Years 1- 2
and codes of good practice (or adopt appropriate international) across the agri-food chain	- Establish dedicated Quarantine and Inspection and Veterinary Services facilities; - Co-locate Quarantine and Inspection Directorate with Veterinary Services Directorate;		Appropriate dedicated space and facilities allocated and operational for Quarantine and Inspection and Veterinary Services and adequately staffed.	Years 1- 2
Food Control Law	- Establish new facilities or adequately provide assistance and support for existing staff training facilities using a combination of the Government and external providers funding and resources;		Appropriate facilities established and given ongoing support.	Years 1-2

Strategies	Objectives and Outcomes	Responsible Ministries	Performance Indicators	Timeframe ¹					
	Code – cover food safety, plant pests and disease	1.2. Develop new or strengthen existing appropriate, enforceable legislation to support SPS measures, including a Food Standards Code – cover food safety, plant pests and disease, and animal health, quarantine, inspection and certification, enforcement, monitoring and evaluation							
	- Review current legal framework and formulate an overarching food control framework under direction of National Food Control Board and Technical Committees to discuss, adopt and make recommendations to approve, plant, animal health and food safety standards;	MoH, MTCI, MAF, AIFAESA	- Food Control Framework developed to support nationally coordinated Food Control System;	Years 1-2					
	- Develop an overarching general Food Control Law;		- Overarching Food Control Law established	Years 1-2					
	- Develop a Food Standards Code (similar to ANZFSC) containing all regulations on priority areas for GoTL: food additives, contaminants and natural toxicants, MRLs for agricultural and veterinary chemicals (agro-food inputs such as pesticides), food labelling, special standards (e.g. infant formula, GM foods, etc.);		 New Food Standards Code with regulations on priority areas: food additives, contaminants and natural toxicants, MRLs for agricultural and veterinary chemicals (agro- food inputs such as pesticides), food labelling, special food standards (e.g. infant formula, GM foods, etc.); 	Years 1-3					
	 Use established Technical Committees (see above) to discuss, develop and obtain GoTL approval of plant, animal health and food safety standards. 		Technical committees established and operational covering plant, animal health and food safety;	Years 1-2					
	 Develop (or preferably adopt existing internationally available) manuals on: Good Hygiene Practices; Good Agriculture Practices; Good Animal Husbandry Practices; Good Aquaculture Practices; Good Manufacturing Practices; HACCP. 		Manuals adopted and distributed to users.	Years 1-2					
	-Provide training workshops to manual users.		Training conducted.	Years 1-2					
Strategy 2	2.1. Establish a mechanism to provide scientif	ic and technical train	ing for GoTL staff to cover all aspects of SPS	measures work					
Develop scientific and technical capacity for risk analysis (risk assessment, risk management, risk	- Establish a new authority or appoint an existing ministry or authority responsible for ensuring that appropriate Government personnel are properly trained in all aspects of food control along the whole agri-food chain (risk assessment, quarantine, inspection and certification, monitoring and	MTCI, AIFAESA	Ministry or authority appointed with responsibility for food control system training of Government staff;	Years 1-2					

Strategies	Objectives and Outcomes	Responsible Ministries	Performance Indicators	Timeframe ¹
communication) and standards	surveillance, laboratory analysis, etc.).			
development	-Establish staff training centers (see above under Establish new or strengthen existing infrastructure);		Staff training centers established and operational;	Years 1-3
	-Identify and utilise appropriate external training providers e.g. foreign governments and NGOs (UNDP, WBIFC, FAO, WHO).		Resources identified and external providers engaged.	Years 1-2
	2.2. Participation of Timor Leste in international	fora supported by add	equate resources	
	-Accession of Timor Leste to Codex Alimentarius Commission. Ensure attendance and establish National Codex Contact Point reporting to National Board (Note: Codex, WTO, SPS EP, OIE, IPPC and ASEAN contact points co-located);	MTCI, MoH, MAF	- Member of Codex ³	Year 1
	,		- Member of IPPC ⁴	
	- Accession of Timor-Leste to IPPC and active participation;		- Member of ASEAN, WTO ⁵	Year 1
	- Become member of ASEAN and the World Trade Organisation and ensure appropriate resources for active participation;		- Documentation of Timor-Leste's participation in international committees	Year 1
	- Promote the participation of Timor Leste in international committees (CAC, IPPC, OIE, and INFOSAN).			Years 2-3
Develop scientific and technical	2.3. Development of a Co-located National Sanita Points	ry and Phytosanitary	(SPS) Enquiry Point, Codex, ASEAN, OIE an	d IPPC Contact
capacity for risk analysis (risk assessment, risk management, risk communication) and standards development	- Operationalization of a co-located SPS, Codex, OIE, IPPC enquiry point to meet the obligations under the WTO SPS Agreement;	MTCI, MAF, AIFAESA, National Food Control Management Board	- SPS Enquiry Point developed; - Codex, OIE, IPPC and ASEAN Enquiry Points developed; <i>ASEAN</i> ; - Co-locate all enquiry points, if possible, with a single Secretariat and responsible to the National Management Board;	Years 1-2
	- Train personnel on Codex Risk Analysis principles, OIE and IPPC procedures and the SPS/TBT agreements;	External bodies providing training gratis, e.g. Codex,	- Trained personnel in risk analysis, SPS/TBT, Codex procedures and standards;	Years 1-2

Process had already begun.
 Already an observer.
 Accession process already begun.

Strategies	Objectives and Outcomes	Responsible Ministries	Performance Indicators	Timeframe ¹
	- Develop SoPs for handling national and international enquiries on technical regulations, standards and certification schemes; - Disseminate information to value chain participants on WTO SPS notifications, Codex standards, OIE and IPPC matters.	FAO/WHO, OIE, WTO. National Food Control Management Board, Technical Committees, MAF, MTCI, MOH, AIFAESA.	- Training records of skilled personnel. - SPS/TBT SOP's for handling national/international enquiries developed - Factsheets, brochures, guides developed and disseminated to value chain actors	Years 1-2 Years 1-2
Strategy 3	3.1. Mechanisms to prevent risks across the entir	e food chain – sanita	rv and phytosanitary issues	
Conduct Sanitary and Phytosanitary data collection and undertake risk	- Collect relevant data on Sanitary and Phytosanitary risks across the entire food chain, e.g.: 1. Plant pests and diseases 2. Animal health 3. Food Safety	National Food Control Management Board, MAF, MoH, MTCI, AIFAESA	- Data collection operational for both Sanitary and Phytosanitary areas for plant pests and diseases, and animal diseases	Years 1-3
assessments to prevent risks across the entire food chain	- Using data collected and verified, conduct risk assessments of protect plant, animal and human health:		- Data verified and used to conduct risk assessments	Years 1-3
Utilise data already collected on	- In the case of plant pests and diseases, identify the pests or diseases that <u>may enter</u> into the country, their mode of establishment or spread, and the		- Plant pests and diseases identified and catalogued	Years 1-3
Phytosanitary issues, and collaborate with proposed initiatives and action plans	potential biological and economic consequences. Evaluate the likelihood of entry, and of establishment or spread of such pests or diseases.		- Consequences evaluated	Years 1-3
already planned by various foreign governments and	- For phytosanitary measures, immediate priority actions should be: 1. For imports, the action plan should be to access and collaborate with any existing	National Food Control Management Board	- Collaborations negotiated	Years 1-3
NGOs e.g. Australian DAFF and WB IFC Phytosanitary Risks	plans for plant safety being considered by the Government. The short-to-medium term priorities should be to undertake the more than 500 IRAs that are needed to assess the risk posed by imports into Timor-Leste, and this work will require: • Compare lists of pests and diseases in exporting countries with those present in	MAF, MTCI, AIFAESA	- IRAS started	Year 1 Years 1 to 3

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Strategies	Objectives and Outcomes	Responsible Ministries	Performance Indicators	Timeframe ¹
	Timor-Leste; Determine which pests are associated with the imported product; Determine which pests pose an unacceptable risk; Manage the risks by imposing conditions,			Years 1-3 Years 1-3
	treatments, certification, and inspection of imported products to ensuring compliance, refusing trade and post-entry quarantine risk mitigation measures;			Years 1-3
	 Strengthen inspection processes and create a central database for the categorization of businesses and foods based on risk. For exports, to undertake work to 			Years 1-3
	facilitate exports of plant products by: • Participating in the IRA of importing	National Food Control Management	- Exported food risks work operationalised;	Years 1-3
	countries by providing lists of pests present in Timor-Leste, • Negotiate import conditions with importing countries,	Board, MAF, MTCI AIFAESA	- Lists of pests in Timor-Leste provided to trading partners to expedite importing country IRAS;	Year 1
	Ensure that the conditions for export to the importing countries are met, and develop		- Negotiations taking place;	Year 1
	appropriate certification for the 11 plant product exports (Arabica and Robusta coffee, Candle Nut, Coconut, Tamarind, Mung Bean, Peanut, Corn, Cloves, Vanilla and Sandal Wood) to the 23 countries where Timor-Leste exports these		- Export conditions of trading partners met and appropriate certifications operational.	Year 1
	commodities. Increase technical capacity needed to assess the risks associated with export			Years 1-3
	trade including 1. Producing a list of pests and diseases present in Timor-Leste and deciding		Technical capacity building initiatives established and ongoing;	Year 1
	which risks need to be managed, 2. Developing appropriate measures to manage these risks,		List of plant pests and disease developed and utilised;	Years 1-2
	3. Confirming that risk management measures are effectively preventing		Measures developed;	Years 1-3
	the entry of viable organisms (e.g.		Risk measures working and effective;	Years 1-2

Strategies	Objectives and Outcomes	Responsible Ministries	Performance Indicators	Timeframe ¹
	inspect imports and identify organisms intercepted), and 4. Participate in the negotiation of the conditions imposed on exported products by importing trade partners.		Participation in export trade negotiations ongoing;	Years 1-3
Sanitary Risks	- For the sanitary measures to work, the action plan should be to access and collaborate with any existing plans for food safety being considered by the Government, for example between AIFAESA and MoH, and the SoW prepared by USAID/TAMU/Avansa, together with a comparison with food safety systems already established internationally in other countries (Indonesia, China, Australia), FAO/WHO and Codex.	National Food Control Management Board, MoH, MAF, MTCI, AIFAESA		Years 1-3
	- The short-to-medium term priorities for food safety should be: 1. Begin the comprehensive collection of databases on food composition and food consumption using the data already collected on foods grown in the country, imported into and exported from Timor-Leste by Quarantine and Biosecurity and Veterinary Directorates and any other relevant information. 2. Assess the suitability for Timor-Leste of Indonesian (or Chinese or both given these countries are biggest trading partners) and Codex standards for Maximum Levels (MLs) for food additives, chemical contaminants, allergens and biotoxins, Maximum Residue Limits (MRLs) for pesticides and veterinary drugs, and guidance values for common food-borne pathogens. 3. Undertake a risk assessment of each food/chemical/biotoxin combination by using MLs and MRLs from trading partners (Indonesian, China, Australia or use Codex		Data collection on food composition and consumption started and ongoing; Food safety standards of exporting countries assessed and compared with Codex standards; Risk assessments underway and ongoing;	Years 1-2 Years 1-4 Years 1-2

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Strategies	Objectives and Outcomes	Responsible Ministries	Performance Indicators	Timeframe ¹
	levels), ADIs and PTDIs or PTWIs from JECFA, together with estimates of exposure			
	(for an average adult of 60-70kg and for a child of 20kg) so that the risk can be			
	characterized. For example, there are 349 imported food products and hundreds of			
	contaminants, food additives and pesticides that each will need a separate risk assessment calculation.			
	4. Assist with the development of relevant and			
	appropriate food safety legislation, including the development of a Food Standards Code (Food Laws) for Timor-Leste along similar lines as the Australian New Zealand Food Standards Code.		Food legislation is developed and operationalised. Food Standards Code established;	Years 1-2
	5. Assess the adequacy of food labeling for			
	food imported into and exported from Timor-Leste. Compare and contrast with labelling standards from Codex and exporting countries.		Adequacy of food labelling assessed and compared with Codex and exporting countries. Remedial enforcement action taken where necessary;	Years 1-4
	Assess capacity within GoTL and UNTL for food safety risk assessment, including chemistry, biology and risk assessment (toxicology, microbiology) and exposure		Capacity within Government and other sources assessed;	Years 1-3
	assessment. 7. Make recommendations to GoTL based on capacity assessment			
	Develop or recommend appropriate guidance documents and training manuals		Recommendations developed and submitted to the Government;	Years 1-3
	and materials for risk analysis capacity building.		Guidance documents and training manuals developed and in use;	Years 1-3
	 Develop "train the trainers" modules on Sanitary and Phytosanitary to target food chain personnel in food safety, GHP, GAqP, GAhP, GMP and HACCP 		Training materials developed and delivered to target groups using "train the trainers" modules on SPS topics; Records on training; Baseline and endline surveys before and after	Years 1-4
			trainings and enforcement; Records from food safety, GHP, GAqP, GAhP,	

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Strategies	Objectives and Outcomes	Responsible Ministries	Performance Indicators	Timeframe ¹
Identify SPS measures commensurate with risk assessments	- Based on the above risk assessments work, identify SPS measures for each risk that will mitigate it according to scientific evidence, either obtained from scientific literature or developed in-country.	National Food Control Management	GMP and HACCP activities; Chemical free food products; SPS measures developed and operationalised and enforced;	Years 14
Establish appropriate ALOPs	- For each SPS measure, establish an Appropriate Level of Sanitary or Phytosanitary Protection, or ALOP, based on the risk and available measures to mitigate it, ensuring that such ALOPs are justifiable by the risk assessment and are consistently applied so as to avoid arbitrary or unjustifiable distinctions in the level of protection, if such distinctions would result in a disguised restriction to international trade.	Board, MAF, MTCI, MoH, AIFAESA	ALOPs established; Adoption and enforcement of integrated plant pest and diseases, animal disease and food safety management strategies;	Years 1-5
Develop Monitoring and Surveillance Systems Enforce SPS Measures	- Establish monitoring and evaluation systems for the assessment of introduced food control measures across the entire food chain; - Enforce SPS measures based on risk assessments in line with international best practices.		SPS measures monitored and evaluated;	Years 1-5
			SPS measures enforced;	Years 1-5
Strategy 4	4.1. Develop food-borne illness surveillance and	response systems		
Food-borne illness surveillance and food safety response	- Strengthen food-borne illness surveillance and emergency response activities;	National Food Control Management Board, MoH	- Developed food-borne disease surveillance documentation and surveys;	Years 1-3
systems	- Development of procedures to evaluate and track food-borne illnesses outbreaks;	,	- SOPs adopted;	Years 1-2
	- Train Health Officers for data collection, information and reporting on food-borne illnesses		- Training records; - Collected data;	Years 1-2
	- Develop a national network for collecting, collating, reporting, and disseminating data to the public		- Evaluation reports/audits; - Monitoring reports;	Years 1-3
	- Estimate the burden of food-borne illnesses in Timor-Leste.		- Disease surveillance reports.	Years 1-3

The implementation of the strategies and activities proposed in the Action Plan will facilitate creation of a coordinated and integrated food control system to protect consumers and promote trade. The regulatory framework will be reviewed and re-drafted covering the whole food control system farm-to-table. National standards will be developed to promote good practices along the whole agri-food chain and in line with regional and international agreements for trade. The establishment of a Food Control System, with a National Food Control Management Board and clear responsibilities developed for designated ministries of the Government of Timor-Leste, will facilitate the enforcement of food safety activities and programmes having consumer protection as a central priority. The successful implementation of the Action Plan will depend on the commitment of the ministries, value chain stakeholders, and consumers.

This Action Plan is developed to cover a 5-year period. A realistic approach for funding needs to be defined. Ongoing monitoring in each of the phases is required to ensure effective implementation. An evaluation at the end of each of the phases will address the successful initiatives, challenges and new opportunities. The Action Plan has suggested activities for SPS-related work which are not mutually exclusive and should be undertaken simultaneously as resources allow in a tiered, step-by-step approach over the short, medium and long term.

Vision

Goals

Institutionalize food control to international standards (WTO SPS Agreement, Codex, IPPC and OIE) in Timor-Leste from farm-to-table to ensure a WTO SPS compliant, safe imported, locally grown and exported food supply that protects the public health and safety of the Timorese population.

Strategies

- 1. Establish integrated food control system in Timor-Leste over 5 years; 2. Membership of WTO, IPPC, OIE, Codex and ASEAN; 3. Achieve WTO SPS compliance in Timor-Leste within 4-5 Years (SPS compliant imported, locally grown and exported food
- (plant/animal)); 4. Acquire scientific and technical skills and experience to achieve SPS compliance, internal/external resources

Metrics

1. Establish new or strengthen existing ministries - established a National Food Control Management Board; combine and/or centralize food control responsibilities between MAF, MOH, MTCI, AIFAESA and resource them to achieve their mandates-remove food responsibilities from other ministries to avoid confusion and foster collaboration; 2. Establish new or strengthen existing infrastructure – establish SPS/Codex Enquiry Point, Quarantine and inspection facilities; Central Food Testing Lab; Combine/merge resources where possible; 3. Acquire technical and scientific capacity by harnessing a combination of internal and external capacity; 4. Conduct Risk Assessments to inform SPS Measures and future appropriate levels of protection for Government of Timor-Leste and trading partners.

Action Plans

Sanitary and Phytosanitary plans to allow graduated, step-by-step progress on both fronts. Short, medium and long-term steps that are pragmatic, achievable and realistic.

- I. Establishment of new and strengthening of existing authorities: single or integrated multiagency Food Control System; National Management Board;
- II. Establishment of new and strengthening of existing infrastructure;
- III. Building/acquiring technical and scientific capacity;
- IV. Collecting data sanitary and phytosanitary information;
- V. Conducting risk assessment;
- VI. Developing legislation;
- VII. Monitoring and evaluation;
- VIII. Institutionalizing.