Canada's experiences with harmonization to international standards, guidelines and recommendations

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Purpose

• To share Canada’s approach to international harmonization and provide a case study example

• Highlight an area of challenge relating to WTO SPS notification templates
Importance of International Harmonization

• The international standards, guidelines, and recommendations (ISGRs) developed by Codex, OIE, and IPPC is pivotal for international harmonization:
  – ISGRs facilitate trade, as the development and use of international standards provide a basis for international regulatory harmonization
  – ISGRs provide a foundation for the development of domestic requirements and enhances the safety of food, animals and plants products in trade, both for imports and exports

• Canada is actively involved in Codex, OIE, and IPPC due to the importance of their work related to harmonization.
Canada’s Approach to International Harmonization

• Throughout the international standard setting process, Canada advocates for our domestic approach and objectives.

• In many cases ISGRs that are conceptual in nature do not conflict with existing Canadian legislation, regulations, or policies – therefore, no specific implementation is required.

• For ISGRs that are specific in nature, steps to implement may be required.

• Canada’s Cabinet Directive on Regulations requires regulators to consider ISGRs in the regulatory development process:
  – The directive sets out the Government of Canada’s expectations and requirements in the development, management, and review of federal regulations.
  – Regulators must provide a rationale for deviating from international standards, guidelines, and recommendations.

• In cases where Canada’s ALOP requires a higher level of protection, Canada SPS measures are based on an assessment of risks taking into account risk assessment techniques developed by the relevant international organizations.
Case Study: The Safe Food for Canadians Regulations

• The Safe Food for Canadians Regulations (SFCR) replaced 14 sets of regulations to modernize Canada's food safety system by focusing on prevention through more rigorous risk management and increasing the focus on traceability.

• The SFCR applies to:
  – Imported, exported, or inter-provincially traded food for human consumption; and
  – Food animals from which meat products to be imported, exported or inter-provincially traded may be derived.

• For more information on SFCR please visit: [ww.inspection.gc.ca/safefood](http://ww.inspection.gc.ca/safefood)

• The SFCR are aligned with internationally recognized standards.
Case Study: The Safe Food for Canadians Regulations

• The SFCR are comprehensive and introduced three fundamental new elements:
  – Licensing, traceability and Preventive control plans.

• Licensing:
  – Enables the CFIA to: authorize persons to conduct certain activities through licensing; identify food businesses, collect information about the activities of food businesses; and take responsive action when non-compliant activities are found
  – Aligns Canada's model with Codex standards
Case Study: The Safe Food for Canadians Regulations

• Preventive Controls:
  – Describes key food safety control principles that must be met by all food businesses
  – Outlines the requirements for developing, implementing, and maintaining a written preventive control plan that documents how food businesses meet food safety requirements
  – The preventive controls related to food safety are based on Codex Alimentarius General Principles of Food Hygiene
Case Study: The Safe Food for Canadians Regulations

• Traceability:
  – Requires that food be traced forward to the immediate customer and backward to the immediate supplier (one step forward, one step back)

  – The traceability requirements are based on Codex principles – tracing of food forward to the person to whom the food was provided and back to the immediate supplier.
Challenge: WTO SPS Notification Template

• The WTO SPS notification template item 8 related to international standards, guidelines, and recommendations can be challenging to complete.

• Reviewing incoming WTO SPS notifications can also be difficult, since there may be varying approaches to completing this item of the notification.

• Possible area for Members to reflect upon and share details on their approaches to completing and reviewing this item of the notification.
## Challenge: WTO SPS Notification Template

8. Is there a relevant international standard? If so, identify the standard:

- [ ] Codex Alimentarius Commission (e.g. title or serial number of Codex standard or related text)
- [ ] World Organization for Animal Health (OIE) (e.g. Terrestrial or Aquatic Animal Health Code, chapter number)
- [ ] International Plant Protection Convention (e.g. ISPM number)
- [ ] None

Does this proposed regulation conform to the relevant international standard?
- [ ] Yes  [ ] No

If no, describe, whenever possible, how and why it deviates from the international standard:

9. Other relevant documents and language(s) in which these are available:

10. Proposed date of adoption (dd/mm/yyyy):

https://www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/sps_e/routine_notif_e.doc
Key Take Away

- Canada is actively involved in the development of ISGRs by Codex, OIE, and IPPC as they facilitate trade by providing a basis for international regulatory harmonization.

- Canada’s Cabinet Directive on Regulations sets out requirements in the development, management, and review of federal regulations and requires regulators to consider ISGRs in the regulatory development process.

- The *Safe Food For Canadians Regulations* are aligned with Codex.

- Possibility for Members to share best practices on their approaches to completing and reviewing the international standards, guidelines, and recommendations item of the WTO SPS notification.
Questions?