Prescribed Certificate Formats vs. Codex Guidance on Certificates

Presented by Mary Stanley
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Codex Committee on Food Import and Export Certification and Inspection Systems (CCFICS)

- Established in 1992
- Host Government: Australia
- Consumer confidence in the safety and quality of their food supply depends on the effectiveness of inspection and certification systems as food control measures
CCFICS Terms of Reference

(b) To develop principles and guidelines...to provide assurance where necessary that foodstuffs comply with requirements, especially statutory health requirements;

d) To develop guidelines and criteria with respect to format, declarations and language of such official certificates as countries may require a view towards international harmonization;

e) To make recommendations for information exchange in relation to food import/export control
Codex Guidance—Official Certificates


- **Model Certificates—Commodity Committees**
  - Fish and Fishery Products (CAC/GL 48-2004)
  - Milk and Milk Products (CAC/GL 67-2008)

- **Generic Model Official Certificate—CCFICS**
  - Adopted by the 32nd Session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC) as an Annex to CAC/GL 38-2001
CAC/GL 38-2001

- Recognizes the competent authority can require official certificates as a condition for clearance

- Guidelines are not intended to encourage or mandate the use of official certificates

- Provides guidance on the design, production, issuance, and use of official certificates
CAC/GL 38-2001—Principles (Section 4)

- Certificates should only be required when essential information and attestations are necessary to ensure food safety and/or fair trade practices (Section 5, Principle A)

- Recognizes that countries may provide assurances through means other than consignment-by-consignment certificates (Section 6, Principle B)
CAC/GL 38-2001—Principles

Information and attestations should be essential, determined by the requirements of the importing country’s food inspection system, and applied in a non-discriminatory manner (Section 7, Principles C and D)

- Commercial or marketing specifications (e.g. conformance to importer specifications) should not be required
- Importing countries should communicate the requirements for official attestations and information to be contained on the certificates and their rationale
Information should be presented in a form that simplifies and expedites the clearance process while meeting the importing country’s requirements (Section 8, Principle E)

- To the extent practicable, use a standard format (e.g. generic model official certificate)
Use of Paper Certificates

Generic Model Official Certificate

- Annex to CAC/GL 38-2001
- Provides a standard format (spatial layout) for official certificates
  - Reduces complexity of multiple formats
- Intended to be read in conjunction with the explanatory notes
  - Include information if required, where appropriate, or if known at the time the certificate is issued
- Facilitates transition from paper to electronic
Use of Electronic Certificates

- Eliminates the need for paper certificates

- Facilitates the need to collect redundant or duplicative information
  - Data required by different agencies within an importing country (e.g. Single Window concept)

- Use of standard data elements and message structure facilitates the exchange of data
Information on the certificate

- Information on the certificate should include as a minimum (Section 8, Principle E):
  - Nature of the food
  - Name of the product
  - Quantity
  - Description of the commodity and consignment
  - Identity, as appropriate, of the producer/manufacturer
  - Exporter or consignor
  - Importer or consignee
  - Country of dispatch
  - Country of destination

- Additional information as agreed to by the importing and exporting country
Information on the certificate

- Relevant attestations and identifying information required by the importing country should be included on a single official certificate, where possible
  - General attestations specific to commodities that address international standards
  - Importing country’s general attestation that addresses compliance with equivalent requirements
  - Prescriptive attestations confined to the need to ensure the product meets food safety requirements
- When measures are implemented to address hazards are satisfactory to the importing country, the use of attestations should be discontinued
Conclusion

- Design an official certificate consistent with provisions in CAC/GL 38-2001

- Official certificates should contain a minimum number of compulsory data elements

- Recognize alternative means to collect duplicative information (e.g. commercial or “single window” through Customs)
QUESTIONS?