

APEC EXPORT CERTIFICATION ROUNDTABLE

February 25-26, 2010

SUMMARY

The APEC Export Certification Roundtable was held on February 25-26, 2010, in Surfer's Paradise, Australia, immediately preceding the Eighteenth session of the CODEX Committee on Food Import and Export Inspection and Certification Systems (CCFICS). Twenty of the 21 member economies participated and 8 served as speakers or moderators. Steering Committee Member of the APEC Partnership Training Institute Network (PTIN) and Chief Scientist of Food Standards Australia New Zealand, Dr Paul Brent, provided the keynote address. The event attracted over 70 experts from across the APEC region; 70 percent represented APEC Member Economies and 30 percent represented food manufactures or associations. The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS) partnered with Australia's Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) and the University of Maryland's Joint Institute for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition (JIFSAN) to sponsor this event.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES

While export certificates facilitate trade in food and agricultural products, the procedures for export certification have grown more complex as regulators strive to ensure food safety throughout the supply chain. The growing trend in export certification includes duplicative, redundant, unavailable, and/or unnecessary export certification requirements. The APEC Export Certification Roundtable was designed to provide a forum to:

- enhance knowledge and input related to Codex guidance on export certification;
- identify common export certification challenges and discuss options to address those challenges;
- review the basis for requirements on the export certificate;
- identify which requirements may not be necessary language for export certification and why;
- share information on best practices and effective solutions;
- promote the use of risk-based export certification requirements; and
- develop common understandings and "best practices" that APEC Members can agree upon in dealing with export certificates.

OUTCOMES

The Roundtable organizers were pleased, not only with the high level of attendance, but also with the level of engagement by attendees throughout the roundtable. The objectives of the

Roundtable were met as it provided a forum for both government and industry representatives from APEC Member Economies to discuss common issues and concerns related to export certificates. The discussion led participants to the following conclusions and observations regarding the issuance and usage of official certificates in the region:

- Certificates are only one of several tools to provide assurances to the importing country regarding the effectiveness of the system of the exporting country
- Where a certificate is required the certificate should simplify and expedite border clearance
- There is a need to keep certificates simple and to avoid redundancy in certificates
- Focus on guidance provided in principles A and B of Codex Guidelines for Design, Production, Issuance and Use of Generic Official Certificates (CAC/GL 38-2001)
 - Official certificates should be required only where attestations and essential information is necessary to ensure food safety or fair practices in food trade
 - Exporting countries may provide assurances through means other than consignment-by-consignment certificates as appropriate
- The differing needs of countries will define the nature and use of export certificates
- In some cases, country legislation may mandate use of certificates
- Export certificate requirements should be based on risk-based decisions
- Attestations should be appropriate for the product for which the certificate is required
- APEC Member Economies should, where possible use experience, knowledge and confidence to reduce the need for certificates
- APEC Member Economies should employ standard formats whenever possible-use, e.g. utilizing Codex guidance
- There is value in enhancing the use of electronic certification in the region

- Establishing a relationship between the exporting and importing countries is important in understanding the needs of the importing country for assurance and the best way those assurances may be satisfied

NEXT STEPS

As a result of the Roundtable dialogue, a number of possible next steps were identified, including: the possibility of APEC providing technical assistance on avoiding unnecessary certificate requirements; a project on “how the Generic Model Official Certificate Annex to the Codex Guidelines for Design, Production, Issuance and Use of Generic Official Certificates (CAC/GL 38-2001) can be more broadly utilized among APEC Member Economies”; a project on enhancing the use of electronic certification in the APEC region; a broad review of APEC certification requirements for food to establish a baseline for proposing that CCFICS consider additional work on incorporating appropriate attestations in the generic model certificate.