

## APEC Export Certificate Roadmap

### **Introduction:**

In April 2013 in Surabaya Indonesia, the APEC Food Safety Cooperation Forum (FSCF) agreed to move forward with work on regulatory cooperation by endorsing an “FSCF Action Plan to Implement the APEC Regulatory Cooperation Plan.” It was agreed that work would focus on two areas: Export Certificates and Pesticide Maximum Residue Limits (MRLs). The overall objective of the FSCF Action Plan is to promote harmonization with relevant international standards wherever possible consistent with WTO obligations (the goal to which APEC Ministers agreed in 2011 and reaffirmed in 2012).

This paper will focus on the roadmap for export certificates. 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 roadmap on export certificates will build on prior activities held under the FSCF Partnership Training Institute Network (PTIN). This roadmap outlines activities for moving forward regulatory cooperation on export certificates by using the outcomes and recommendations that were developed out of prior FSCF PTIN activities.

### **Background:**

On April 24-25, 2012, the United States hosted a workshop on Export Certificates under the aegis of the APEC Food Safety Cooperation Forum (FSCF) Partnership Training Institute Network (PTIN). Building on an earlier roundtable on export certificates (February 2010), the workshop examined in detail the utility of official export certificates, the challenges in issuing them, the appropriateness of export certificates for their intended purpose, food industry mechanisms for meeting commercial and official requirements, and other effective means for countries to provide assurances. Participants agreed there would be value in continuing work in this area.

The development of a roadmap will allow us to track our efforts and ensure they are consistent with APEC’s work to create an environment for the secure and efficient movement of goods, services and people across borders in the region through policy alignment and economic and technical cooperation as well as the Food Safety Cooperation Forum’s (FSCF) overall goal to promote alignment of to relevant international standards.

### **Objective:**

Development of a two year plan that will contribute to the facilitation of the harmonized export certificate requirements, practices and procedures with relevant international standards such as Codex Alimentarius (Codex), the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE), and the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC), among APEC member economies to ensure consistency with existing World Trade Organisation (WTO) obligations.

Strive for clarification, consistency and efficiencies with regards to implementation and future development of these international standards, including practices and procedures currently in use in the APEC region, in order to provide a common understanding/level playing field in the APEC region.

**Key Milestones and Dates:**

- Identify priority areas and work towards creating a common understanding as a foundation for the Action Plan (by December 2013):
  - Explore the possibility of developing a compendium of official certification requirements as identified by industry and regulators in order to identify the priority areas for the eWG to focus its work.
  - Further explore the concept of experience, knowledge and confidence<sup>1</sup> in terms of bilateral and multilateral trade relationships.
- Develop an APEC Export Certificate Toolbox (by April 2014 – FSCF Special Session tentatively scheduled on margins of SOM2)
  - Develop criteria to assist countries in determining where attestations and essential information are necessary to ensure that food safety and/or fair practices in the food trade requirements are met in order to minimize the certification requirements
  - Build a common framework to identify broad areas of risk
  - Use these criteria to develop a model APEC certificate including attestations on animal health, free sale, and onward certification and an accompanying export certificate guidance document to serve as a reference for all member economies
  - Develop an electronic certification standard package consistent with already agreed internationally standards (data elements, internationally accepted formats, etc)
  - Develop agreed definitions and understanding for common certificate nomenclature where needed
  - Secure the FSCF, SCSC, and Trade/Agriculture Ministers endorsement for the criteria, model APEC certificate, electronic certification standard package, as a contribution to APEC's trade facilitation targets
  - Secure the FSCF, SCSC, and Agriculture Trade Ministers endorsement for the guidance document

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<sup>1</sup> Experience, knowledge and confidence in an exporting country's food inspection and certification system by an importing country includes the history of food trade between two countries and the history of compliance of foods with the importing country's requirements, particularly the food products involved. Further examples that may inform the importing country's experience, knowledge and confidence are listed in paragraph 10 points (a) to (n) in appendix CAC/GL 53-2003.

**Process:**

In order to achieve the stated objective, an electronic Working group (eWG) will be the mechanism used to reach the following milestones and benchmarks.

- Convene an Overarching electronic Working Group on Export Certification
  - Contact the APEC Export Certificate Workshop participants and other stakeholders to announce plans to convene the eWG (Confirm Current Points of Contact, etc.)
  - Determine if sub-working groups will be needed to address topics of interest
  - Prioritize issues to be covered by the working group
  - Identify leaders for specific topics/sub-working groups
  - include relevant elements from OIE, IPPC and the WCO, as appropriate

July 2013	Convene an electronic Working group (eWG)
	Present draft Roadmap and revise as needed
	Kick off Message to Stakeholders
	Call for Issue Discussion Leaders
August 2013-August 2014	Monthly Progress Report from Issue Leads
December 2013	Has a Common Understanding been Created?
January 2014	Interim Readout from the Issue Specific Groups
February 2014	Draft Principles Paper out for Comment based on Work to Date
October 2014	Physical Meeting on the Margins of the Codex Committee on Food Import and Export Inspection and Certification Systems Meeting
October 2014	Dependent upon the outcome of the physical meeting: develop recommendations for new work that could be presented to Codex/CCFICS (OIE or IPPC as appropriate.)