

1. Removing Barriers for Intra ASEAN Trade for Food Products

The Product Working Group on Prepared Foodstuffs (PFPWG) is actively assisting ASEAN in the task of eliminating technical barriers to trade in the prepared foodstuff sector. Among the initiatives that it is embarked on include the development of harmonised food control requirements for ASEAN. These are in the form of the ASEAN Common Food Control Requirements (ACFCRs). These harmonised requirements provide a basis for Member States to establish compatible domestic regulations that will enable respective regulatory agencies to have mutual confidence in the food control systems implemented with regard to ensuring the safety of food and providing for fair trade practices.



A workshop on Review and Development of Guidelines on ACFCRs was held at the ASEAN Secretariat, Jakarta on July 14-15, 2014 to review the existing ACFCRs published in 2006 and the proposed new draft Guidelines. The workshop was held in conjunction with a meeting of the PFPWG Task Force on Mutual Recognition Arrangement (MRA) on prepared food stuff.

Some recommendations to the previous ACFCRs Guidelines and the final new draft Guidelines were developed at the workshop. The proposed Guidelines will be closely aligned to Codex Alimentarius Commission standards and assist PFPWG in its work for establishing a MRA in prepared food stuff sector.

This MRA is designed to enable Member States to accept food control inspections and certifications system in order to remove technical barrier to trade. The ACFCRs provide a reference and a harmonised basis for the implementation of the MRA. As the ACFCRs are based on international standards, it will also ensure compatibility with international obligations.

The workshop was supported by the ASEAN Regional Integration Support from the EU (ARISE) programme.

<http://arise.asean.org/removing-barriers-for-intra-asean-trade-for-food-products/>

2. Leather, Footwear Criteria to be Set

The Viet Nam Leather and Footwear Association (VLFA) has unveiled plans to develop product quality and safety criteria to raise the industry's production standards. The move aims to offer a basis for producers to deliver better quality products and create a level playing field between domestic and foreign players.

Despite Viet Nam's leather and footwear industry still being heavily reliant on imported materials, it did not have its own set of criteria to control the use of unsafe chemicals. Though the industry required 220,000-250,000 tonnes of leather each year, with domestic suppliers supplying about 100,000 tonnes, there were only a small group of testing centres in Viet Nam dedicated to assessing material inputs used by leather and footwear producers.



As a result, footwear firms have to test their materials and products themselves to meet importers' requirements. It is said that the absence of a system for controlling the use of chemicals in leather products meant domestic producers were being held to a double standard.

On the other hand, leather and footwear products that were imported to Viet Nam did not face such barriers. Viet Nam's participation in major trade pacts that imposed zero percent tariffs on products created even bigger challenges to domestic producers, including losing their market share at home. Hence, a set of criteria imposed by Viet Nam or technical barriers were also needed to better control imported materials and products to the country.

<http://vietnamnews.vn/economy/256821/leather-footwear-criteria-to-be-set.html>

3. Trying to Meet EU Export Standards

As the Vietnamese and global economy is changing and integrating in depth and width, businesses would meet both opportunities and challenges. Concluding free trade agreements is one of strategic directions for not only Vietnam but also many other countries. The EU-Vietnam Free Trade Agreement (EVFTA) is under negotiations which are expected for completion this year. The EU currently is Vietnam's largest export market and fifth largest import market.

Actually, only 42 percent of Vietnamese exports to Europe currently are subject to the zero percent Generalised System of Preferences (GSP) tariff. However, conditions for Vietnam to pay this preferential tariff would be tightened in the near future.

Once the EVFTA takes effect, the percentage of Vietnamese exports subject to the zero percent tariff would significantly increase and would even reach 90 percent providing opportunities for Vietnamese businesses to enter the EU market and boost their exports.

Meanwhile, businesses would increase their involvement in the global supply chain and promote EU investment in Vietnam thus helping improve Vietnam's position in the international arena.

It is said that the EU market always required importers to meet strict technical standards. For this reason, right now businesses need to get updates on FTA negotiations, observe regulations on origin of products to receive preferences, make plans to join the regional supply chain and learn about technical standards and consumer habits in the EU market to ensure that they would make the most of export opportunities after EVFTA negotiations are completed.

In the long term businesses also need to increase the added values of their products, particularly textiles and garments, electronic accessories and footwear since most materials must be imported. EVFTA negotiations are expected for completed in 2014 offering major opportunities to boost Vietnamese exports to the EU and an impetus for Vietnamese goods to join the global supply chain.

http://ven.vn/en-us/trying-to-meet-eu-export-standards_t221c198n49093.aspx



4. World Bank Urges Cleaner Stoves to Save Lives, Fight Global Warming

A World Bank study showed that simple measures to reduce pollution from cooking stoves in developing nations could save a million lives a year and help slow global warming. Tighter restrictions on diesel emissions, for instance from car exhausts, could also avert 340,000 premature deaths annually by reining in soot and other heat-trapping pollutants that are also stoking climate change.



The study called for tough limits on pollution from methane and soot, which can settle on snow and ice and hasten a thaw by darkening its surface, in everything from cooking and heating to mining and flaring by the oil and gas industry.

Many people in developing nations cook on open fires with wood or coal, exposing people – mainly women and children – to fumes that cause everything from respiratory problems to heart disease. If more clean cook-stoves – stoves that use less or cleaner fuel – would be used it could save one million lives.

New stoves use fans to improve combustion, or less-polluting fuels such as gas from crop waste or manure. Tighter controls on pollution could also boost crop growth, the report said. Plant growth can be hampered by a haze of pollution.

www.voanews.com/content/reu-world-bank-urges-cleaner-stoves-save-lives-fight-global-warming/1782624.html

5. European Parliament Favours Reducing Single-Use Plastic Bags

On April 16, 2014 the plenary of the European Parliament voted in favour of the draft European Directive on carrier bags presented by the Commission on November 04, 2013.

As a result of the vote, the European Parliament agreed to reduce the consumption of lightweight plastic carrier bags (50 percent reduction by 2017 and 80 percent by 2019, compared with 2010 figures).

Member States will be able to restrict the use of plastic bags by using a derogation from article 18 of the Packaging and Packaging Waste Directive.

The EP also proposed to phase-out bags that fragment and do not biodegrade and ban harmful substances in plastic bags. Therefore, the use of oxodegradable plastics is not considered a viable option.

The draft law allows countries that have implemented a ban, like Italy, to keep that legislation in place. Italy has already achieved a 50 percent reduction in single-use bags, and successfully linked an exemption for certified compostable bags to its organic waste diversion goals.

It also permits countries that have implemented a tax, like Ireland, to have reusable bags not sold for less than the tax. Ireland has achieved an 80 percent reduction in the use of single-use bags with its 22-cent tax, and this ensures reusable bags cannot be sold for less (which would lead to an increase in the total number of bags used).

www.zerowasteeurope.eu/2014/04/european-parliament-votes-in-favour-of-reducing-single-use-plastic-bags/



6. Vietnamese Government Encourages Use of Bio-Fuel

Bio-fuel will be soon sold in all cities and provinces of Viet Nam, though it has been difficult meeting the government's schedule. Large petrol dealers, including Petrolimex and PVOil, have prepared facilities for selling 5 per-cent bio-ethanol (E5) fuel in seven provinces and cities.

These areas include Ha Noi, HCM City, Hai Phong, Da Nang, Can Tho, Quang Ngai and Ba Ria Vung Tau. Further, the Viet Nam National Petroleum Group (Petrolimex) will begin selling biofuel E5 RON 92 in the central province of Quang Ngai as of September 01, 2014, three months earlier than in other provinces and cities. E5 RON 92, which is made up of unleaded gasoline and four to five percent ethanol, will

replace the traditional Mogas 92, as all petrol stations in Quang Ngai will sell E5 RON 92 and Mogas RON 95.

Based upon a draft plan from 2012, compiled by the MoIT to submit to the Government, the selected seven cities and provinces were to sell E5 as of 2013, though the initial schedule was delayed one year because of consumer habits and due to demand for bio-fuel on the domestic market being low.

Additionally, bio-fuel plants have not operated efficiently and the State has not had any mechanisms to encourage enterprises to enter the domestic bio-fuel market.

To date, three out of 10 petrol dealers are selling bio-fuel products at 169 petrol stations, out of 13,000 petrol stations throughout the country. Further, consumption of bio-fuel is estimated to be one-eighth of the consumption of traditional fuel products.

Vietnam is currently a participating country to negotiate an international standard on "Sustainability criteria for bioenergy" within the framework of the International Organisation for Standardisation (ISO).

<http://vietnamnews.vn/economy/256981/govt-encourages-use-of-bio-fuel.html>



7. Broad Coalition Pledges to Cut “Super Greenhouse Gases”

An international coalition has agreed to begin working towards domestic regulation aimed at reducing the use of hybrid fibre-coaxial (HFCs), compounds commonly used as refrigerants but referred to as “super greenhouse gases” for their particularly negative impact on global warming.

Environmental groups are lauding the decision, one of a suite of agreements struck in September 2013 at a summit in Oslo by the Climate and Clean Air Coalition to Reduce Short-Lived Climate Pollutants (CCAC), which includes 34 developed and developing countries and 38 organisations.

“CCAC Partner countries will adopt domestic approaches to encourage climate-friendly HFC alternative technologies and work toward a phasedown in the production and consumption of HFCs under the Montreal Protocol. We will work with international standards organisations to revise their standards to include climate-friendly HFC alternatives.”

The CCAC focuses on four pollutants with short atmospheric lives – HFCs, methane, so-called black carbon and what’s known as tropospheric ozone, a main constituent of smog. The group’s founding aim was to try to reduce some of these short-lived climate pollutants (SLCPs) ahead of when next international climate treaty is to come into being, in 2020.

Representatives will now be tasked with going home and figuring out regulatory or legislative fixes to various SLCP issues, including their level of HFC use. No targets have been set under the new agreement, but the overarching plan currently is to reduce HFC use by 80 percent, allowing the remainder to be used for military and certain other purposes.

www.ipsnews.net/2013/09/broad-coalition-pledges-to-cut-super-greenhouse-gases/



8. No More Waste: Tracking Water Footprints

Water is an essential natural resource, vital for life. Growing water demand, increasing scarcity and degradation of water quality means that its use and management have become central to the global debate on sustainability.



To improve water management at local, regional and global levels, we first need a better understanding of related impacts, as well as internationally consistent assessment techniques, to identify our water footprint and report results.

To address these issues, ISO created working group WG 8, Water footprint, within technical committee ISO/TC 207, Environmental management, sub-committee SC 5, Life cycle assessment. The WG is developing ISO 14046, Environmental management – Water footprint – Principles, requirements and guidelines, expected to be published in mid 2014.

ISO 14046 will specify principles, requirements and guidelines related to the water footprint assessment of products, processes and organisations, based on life-cycle assessment. It can be used to conduct and report a water footprint assessment.

ISO 14046 is expected to benefit organisations, governments and interested parties worldwide by providing transparency, consistency and credibility to the task of assessing water footprint and reporting the water footprint results of products, processes or organisations.

www.iso.org/iso/news.htm?refid=Ref1760

9. Japan to Stop Vietnamese Shrimp Imports

Japanese businesses are planning to import shrimp from India and Indonesia instead of Vietnam, due to the excessively high levels of oxytetracycline (OTC) in Vietnamese shrimp. According to the Vietnam Association of Seafood Exporters and Producers (VASEP), the decision was made due to the excessively high levels of OTC that were continuing to be detected in Vietnamese shrimp shipments, despite prior warnings and the public knowledge that virtually all Vietnamese shrimp exports were being tested for the antibiotic.

VASEP asked the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development's Directorate of Fisheries to strictly control shrimp cultivating areas to prevent such a situation. VASEP's figure showed that 11 shrimp shipments to the EU and Japan were returned in the first four months of the year because of high OTC levels. The number of shrimp shipments being returned by Japan had risen because it started testing for OTC in all Vietnamese shrimps.

It is also warned that Japanese importers are planning to import shrimp from the two above-mentioned countries as they have taken measures to reduce the OTC level. Japanese importers have also guided shrimp processing factories in India to process shrimps to switch the orders from Viet Nam.

Earlier, the EU discovered OTC levels in some shrimp shipments from Vietnam to be higher than the allowed level of 0.1ppm. The EU would consider applying stricter measures on Vietnamese shrimp if Vietnam did not improve the situation.

The association also warned that unless the local shrimp businesses strengthened self-regulation of OTC, they would fail to penetrate the Japanese market as well as to meet the target of making Vietnam one of the top three shrimp exporters in the world.

www.waresources.com.au/japan-may-stop-vietnamese-shrimp-imports



10. Extra US\$44tn for Clean Energy Future

According to the International Energy Agency (IEA), electricity would increasingly power the world's economies in the decades to come, rivalling oil as the dominant energy carrier.

Growing use of coal globally is overshadowing progress in renewable energy deployment, and the emissions intensity of the electricity system has not changed in 20 years despite some progress in some regions. A radical change of course at the global level would be long overdue.



Such a change would, however, be expensive, and the IEA stressed the importance of governments minimising investment risks in the energy sector so as to encourage institutional funding. The agency said an additional US\$44tn in investment was needed to secure a "clean-energy future" by 2050, compared to the US\$36tn it had estimated in its 2012 report. The increase partly shows something the IEA has said for some time: the longer we wait, the more expensive it becomes to transform our energy system.

While the deployment of clean energy technology in emerging economies has rallied over the past year – making up for declines in the industrialised world – the overall picture remains bleak. Attracting capital investment will be crucial to financing the transition

to a clean energy system, the report said, but high capital costs meant investors would need support "to alleviate their exposure to a shift in risk profiles".

<http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/international/business/iea-says-extra-44-trillion-needed-for-clean-energy-future/articleshow/35025673.cms>

11. ISO 19600: Compliance Management Systems — Guidelines

As a young and complex matter, compliance presents numerous challenges for organisations. This is partly due to the lack of global standards, which could provide guidance. As a consequence, organisations are having a hard time recognising those compliance requirements that are necessary, appropriate and capable of serving as indicators of a functioning compliance management system (CMS). Therefore, it is highly welcome that the ISO is currently working on a global standard for CMS.

The draft of ISO 19600 has been unanimously endorsed by the participating ISO members. The competent committee (ISO/PC 271) is currently meeting in Vienna to review the comments and votes and then issue a final draft based on their review. The final draft will be put up for a final vote. Provided that the final vote will be positive, ISO 19600 will presumably be published in 2015.

ISO 19600 is designed as a flexible guideline without any normative references. It provides recommendations based on the principles of good governance, flexibility, proportionality, transparency and sustainability. It is open for all kind of organisations.

Especially small and medium-sized companies benefit from this approach, as they can implement the guideline recommendations according to the size and maturity of their company. It is this kind of flexibility that gives small and medium-sized companies the incentive to deal with compliance on their own terms. Because the guideline is based upon the principle of continual improvement (plan, do, check, act), organisations can expand their CMS as their needs increase.

www.compliancedigital.de/ce/iso-19600-compliance-management-systems-guidelines-beschlossen/detail.html

