Codex Maximum Residue Limits (MRLs): The Need and Increasing Capacity

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Outline of Presentation

• Background: International Year of Pulse (IYP) Initiative
• Importance of Pesticide Codex MRLs
• Goal of the IYP MRL Strategy
• Specifics Initiatives of Strategy
• Specifics of “Catch-Up” Plan
• Key Messages
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Background: International Year of Pulse (IYP) Initiative

- 2016 was the International Year of Pulse (IYP) and the Global Pulse Confederation dedicated resources to advocacy efforts concerning the extent of the lack of or misalignment of maximum residue limits (MRLs).
- May disrupt trade and constrain growers’ productive use of pesticides, including newer, safer products, in pulse growing regions of the world, including farmers in developed and developing countries alike.

Other concerns:
- More countries develop national MRL lists without continuing to reference Codex; applying zero or near-zero default MRLs in absence of established MRLs.
- Never a greater need for a single, global MRL reference.
Importance of Codex MRLs

• The results of the work of Joint Meeting on Pesticide Residues (JMPR) and Codex Committee on Pesticide Residues (CCPR) play an important role for the safety of the consumer but also for the facilitation of world trade of food commodities.

• Codex MRLs are referenced by WTO under the SPS agreement as international standards for food and feed moving in international trade and are legal limits with consequence for non-compliance.

• The procedures/methodologies and outcomes of the JMPR/CCPR are valuable to many regulatory authorities and others involved in agriculture.

• Lack of or misaligned MRLs may disrupt trade, constrain the use of pesticides including non-use of newer, safer compounds for farmers in developed and developing countries alike.
Focus of Global Pulse Confederation Initiative in 2016

• Importance of increasing the number of Codex MRLs elaborated each year;
• Importance of a common set of standards;
• Need to ensure foods are safe while also facilitating trade.
Specifics Initiatives of Strategy

The Global Pulse Commission (GPC) has developed a strategy to support the JMPR/CCPR and Codex MRL establishment initially in the context of the 2016 International Year of Pulses (IYP). Specifics include:

- The framing of the universe of Codex MRLs needed to minimally match those established in other countries and to address specific specialty crops in countries now globally traded with few Codex MRLs;
  - Would be achieved through the development of a “catch-up” plan.
- Involve developing countries where the MRLs issues are creating obstacles for farmers.
- The need for additional resources at JMPR including an increase in the number of experts on JMPR, the support of member countries, and the availability of a sustainable budget for JMPR/CCPR for annual as well as extraordinary meetings of the JMPR.
Specifics Initiatives of Strategy (Cont’d)

• Leverage the availability of electronic tools.
• Utilize to extent possible national reviews and MRLs already established by national authorities and avoid duplicative work.
• Maximize the use of crop groupings and representative commodities.
• Avoid re-work and delay through clear guidance on residue trial requirements.
• Ensure the consistency of application and adherence to the policies adopted by JMPR and CCPR.
Specifics of “Catch-Up” Plan

• The United States is often the first country industry seeks registration for new pesticide active ingredients and uses in and, therefore, is often where MRLs are first established.

• The “catch-up’ plan will identify gaps in Codex MRLs as compared to the MRLs established in the US as well as in other countries. The “catch-up” plan will be developed through the following steps:

  • Compare list of registered active ingredients in the US and other countries to those reviewed by JMPR/WHO. Produce list of active ingredients needing JMPR/WHO review for ADI (acute/chronic) setting.

  • Compare list of existing Codex MRLs to US MRLs and other countries using available MRL data bases particularly to identify additional MRLs for specialty crops specific to certain geographic locations; and solicit input from other countries (national authorities, commodity groups) on needed Codex MRLs.

  • Prepare a preliminary report on the chemical/commodity combinations gaps where Codex MRLs are needed.
Specifics of “Catch-Up” Plan

• Once the universe of needed Codex MRLs is identified, discussions with industry to determine which active ingredients they will support through the Codex process will occur.

• Commodity groups globally and country contacts will be contacted to determine priorities for the need for a Codex MRL. The preliminary “catch-up” plan will be refined to further define the Codex MRLs needing to be established.
Specifics of “Catch-Up” Plan

• The “catch-up” plan will be discussed with the FAO and WHO JMPR Secretariats and possible options on how to accomplish the work will be identified; concept already has been discussed.

• Process improvements to efficiently complete the “catch-up” plan and sustain the required pace of establishing Codex MRLs going forward will be critical to the implementation of the plan.

• Additionally, funding options to complete the work in the “catch-up’ will be developed in consultation with FAO and WHO.

• Coalitions to advocate to the WHO/FAO leadership and member states the need to establish the MRLs identified in the “catch-up” will be critical to advance the initiative.
International Agri-Food Network (IAFN) Coalition to Support Codex Alimentarius

• IAFN Initiative is a coalition of international industry members, including the Global Pulse Confederation, who seek to ensure the continued production and trade of safe, high quality and diverse food.

• Agricultural producers need Codex MRLs that are issued in close to product country registrations and prior to treated commodities moving in international trade.

• Coalition represents industry associations across the agric-food chain.

• Working to continue initiative begun in 2016 by GPC.
Key Messages

• Trade is critical to food security and the ability to trade in food is central to the livelihoods of many of the world’s rural poor.
• Delays in the establishment of MRLs and the resulting lack of harmonization have important consequences for market access, productivity and farmer livelihoods
• Enabling Codex to perform its role effectively by addressing current capacity challenges and ensuring adequate resources are available is essential to supporting global food security.
Near Term Next Steps

- Continue to define “catch-up” plan.
- Hold side event at 49th CCPR meeting April 24th on the initiatives to increase the capacity of JMPR and other measures and gain support from other delegations.
- Pursue funding in the US government and additional experts to serve on the JMPR
Thank You for Your Attention!