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SPECIFIC ISSUES OF INTEREST TO THE CPAB:

NZFSA Proposes Addition of Several New MRLs

- The New Zealand Food Safety Authority (NZFSA) recently issued a notification of a proposed amendment that would modify the maximum residue levels (MRLs) for 12 different chemicals. The changes will apply to the New Zealand (Maximum Residue Limits of Agricultural Compounds) Food Standards 2009.
- The new MRLs include the addition of thiacloprid on pome fruits (which includes pears) at 0.3 parts per million (ppm), and aviglycine on pome fruits at 0.1 ppm. The U.S. MRLs that apply to pears are 0.3 ppm and 0.08 ppm respectively.
- NZFSA is seeking comments on all issues pertaining to this proposed regulation. Comments are due by February 22, 2010. For more information or to submit a comment, please see: http://members.wto.org/crnattachments/2010/sps/NZL/10_0043_00_e.pdf.

New Zealand to Issue Import Regulation for Chinese Pears

- Biosecurity New Zealand recently proposed a new import health standard for fresh pears from China.
- In addition to the general sanitary and phytosanitary conditions that must be met for all horticultural imports, Biosecurity New Zealand specifies certain conditions applicable to Chinese pears, including: pre-shipment inspection and certification by China's National Plant Protection Organization (NPPO), phytosanitary documentation requirements, additional declarations, transit requirements, and arrival inspections, testing, and clearance procedures.
- The standard also provides a list of high-risk pests associated with Chinese fresh pears. To view the proposed standard in full, please see: http://members.wto.org/crnattachments/2010/sps/NZL/10_0041_00_e.pdf.

Venezuela to Require New Certificates for Imports in Wake of Currency Devaluation

- According to a U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS) report, Venezuelan officials have announced new import requirements in the wake of the recent U.S. exchange rate change.
- President Hugo Chavez recently implemented a dual exchange rate system by which "priority" products from the U.S. are eligible for an exchange rate of 2.60 Bolivars per dollar, while other products face a rate of 4.30 Bolivars per dollar (see the January 15 edition of the *BCI Monitor* for additional information). Officials have revealed that 59 percent of imports will face the higher rate, including pears. A translation of the full list of "priority" products is expected soon.
- All products imported under the lower exchange rate, as well as fruits that face the higher exchange rate, will be required to have a Certificate of Non-Production or Insufficient Production. These certificates were not previously required.
- Venezuelan economists indicated that the currency change could directly increase food prices by 21 percent.

GENERAL ISSUES OF INTEREST TO THE CPAB:**Russia to Reduce Bureaucracy in Agricultural Sector**

- Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin recently proposed a comprehensive overhaul of the country's agricultural sector, citing the unnecessary bureaucratic costs and procedures that currently limit food distribution.
- The reforms will target Russia's food inspection agency, the Federal Veterinary and Phytosanitary Inspection Service, by reducing up to 70 percent of the agency's bureaucratic costs. The reforms will also focus on protecting food manufacturers and curbing domestic corruption through market-oriented forms of accreditation, insurance, and institutional evaluations.
- About half of Russia's current agricultural regulations would need to be reformed to meet these goals, according to Russian Agricultural Minister Yelena Skrynnik. Skrynnik expects Russia to issue a plan of action laying out specific regulatory reforms by 2012.

Taiwan to Launch Carbon Labeling Trial

- According to recent media sources, Taiwan's Environmental Protection Administration is preparing a trial labeling system that would display the carbon footprint of retail goods. Officials reportedly plan to include items such as beverages in plastic bottles, cookies, candy, and some non-food items in the initial trial.
- It is not clear how quickly the trial will be launched. Officials indicated that competing globally in light of increasing demand for carbon-labeled products was a major motivation in the establishment of the program, noting that the Taiwanese economy depends upon exports.

Indonesia to Implement New Standards for Imported Fresh Fruit and Vegetables in 2012

- Indonesia's Ministry of Agriculture announced that it will implement new national standards in 2012 as a means to control the recent surge of imported fruits and vegetables. The proposed standards will increase regulatory oversight of imported horticultural products, and will specifically require that all imported fruit be tested for sugar and acid content, color, and ripeness.
- An Indonesian agricultural official cited concerns over the poor quality of imported fruits and vegetables as the impetus for the new standards. The reforms are also viewed as a way to address the rapid increase of imports in Indonesian fruit markets.
- Indonesian officials did not provide specifics regarding the new standards, which will be developed this year.

Russia May Allow Use of Foreign Technical Standards

- A recent FAS report indicates that Russian officials have implemented legislation that would allow Russian businesses to choose to comply with Russian technical standards or approved foreign technical standards. Additionally, Russian authorities will be able to temporarily use standards of other customs union countries (Belarus or Kazakhstan) or European Union (EU) standards in cases where a Russian standard has not been developed.
- While these and other amendments to the technical standards regulation have been tentatively welcomed by the Russian business community, it is not yet clear how easy or time-effective it will be to gain Russian government approval for foreign standards.
- For additional information, please see: http://gain.fas.usda.gov/Recent%20GAIN%20Publications/Amendments%20to%20the%20Federal%20Law%20on%20Technical%20Regulation_Moscow_Russian%20Federation_1-14-2010.pdf.

China Reports Improvements in Agricultural Product Safety and Quality

- Chinese officials have indicated that 2009 food safety testing results show that the safety of China's agricultural products has improved, saying that compliance with standards for vegetables increased from 96.3 percent in 2008 to 96.4 percent in 2009. Animal product standard compliance was higher.
- In 2009, Chinese officials monitored the safety of fruit, mushrooms, and tea for the first time. A total of 98 percent of fruit samples met Chinese standards. Chinese officials also increased monitoring activities from 36 to 259 cities.
- There are plans to further expand monitoring in 2010 to include additional tests for banned pesticides.