GLOBAL STANDARD SETTING AND IMPLEMENTATION INTO NATIONAL POLICIES AND LEGISLATION

FAO FOCUS AREA

As globalization continues to soften national borders and increase global attention to transboundary issues, it becomes increasingly important for countries to have access to internationally accepted and harmonized standards and practices that will enable them to seek common solutions to global challenges.

FAO's work in providing global public goods – ranging from setting norms and standards to guidelines, protocols and codes of practice – cannot be viewed as separate from its operational activities in the field. The two areas of work are not only interdependent, they are mutually reinforcing, with FAO's on-the-ground activities supported by normative resources, and its normative work constantly reinforced by lessons learned in the field.

At national level, FAO supports countries in developing capacity to adopt accepted norms and standards into their own national policies and legal frameworks aimed at promoting sustainable agriculture and ensuring that food produced is safe and healthy. Assistance provided at the national level also aims at introducing internationally accepted best practices and principles into national legislation. This includes principles of good governance, which are crucial for sustainable agriculture.

Neutral forum for debate of globally important issues

FAO provides a neutral forum where those focused on setting standards can come together to share, debate and decide on common ways forward. For example, Codex Alimentarius, hosted at FAO, sets the world's food standards and also provides support to ensure all countries participate in the debate and have guidance in adapting or adopting the standards in their national legislation. The Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, also at FAO, negotiated the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture and, more recently, negotiated and agreed the Second Global Plan of Action for Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture.

VOLUNTARY GUIDELINES ON THE RESPONSIBLE GOVERNANCE OF TENURE OF LAND, FISHERIES AND FORESTS IN THE CONTEXT OF NATIONAL FOOD SECURITY

FAO Member Countries gathered at FAO headquarters in Rome in March 2012 for final negotiations that led to agreement on the world's first guidelines on governance of tenure – guidelines that will change the way countries govern access rights to land, fisheries and forest resources. Some 1000 experts from FAO Member Countries, UN organizations, resource and implementing partners participated in the seven year drafting and negotiation process, under the auspices of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS).

EXAMPLES OF IMPACT

SECOND GLOBAL PLAN OF ACTION FOR PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

When a Global Plan of Action for Plant Genetic Resources was adopted by 150 countries in 1996, it offered the world its first framework for creating an efficient system to fight the loss of the world's crop genetic diversity. The uptake of the plan proved so successful that FAO reconfirmed its commitment by adopting the Second Global Plan of Action in 2011.

PROCESS: The Second Global Plan of Action was prepared based on a series of regional consultations with participation of 131 countries, and research, private sector and civil society organizations. The Commission on Genetic Resources finalized the Plan, which was adopted by the FAO Council in 2011.

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IMPACT: Protected areas have expanded by 30 percent, and gene banks increased by 300, from 1450 to 1750. Small farmers increasingly participate in breeding programmes. Despite this progress, gaps remain which need to be addressed urgently, such as the loss of plant genetic diversity. The Second Global Plan of Action will address these gaps and further progress toward the sound management of the world's heritage of plant genetic resources.

GLOBAL INITIATIVE FOR FOOD-RELATED SCIENTIFIC ADVICE

Globalization, changes in food production systems and food consumption patterns, increased food trade and the emergence of new hazards have resulted in greater demands for scientific advice to support governments' efforts in building national food control systems.

Whether a country is developing its own food safety regulations or Codex Alimentarius is debating the need or impact of a new global food standard, the decisions must be based on science.

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PROCESS: The Global Initiative for Food-related Scientific Advice (GIFSA) is a multidonor trust fund, launched by FAO and the World Health Organization (WHO), to expand the provision of scientific advice in areas such as risk assessment of food additives, veterinary drug residues and microbial hazards, to enable more timely advice in emerging areas of food safety concern, such as nanotechnologies, and to strengthen scientific capacities at national and regional level to support science-based decisions and data generation.

IMPACT: At the core of the Science for Safe Food Strategy are activities related to establishing science-based standards and strengthening national and regional capacities to ensure food safety measures that are based on science. For example, GIFSA supported the review and testing of a web-based tool to assist policy-makers in setting *Salmonella* and *Campylobacter* control measures, and hosted an FAO/WHO Expert meeting that led to a well-received set of recommendations on application of nanotechnologies in the food and agriculture sectors.