



JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION

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FAO GM FOODS PLATFORM

(<http://fao.org/gm-platform/>)

Introduction of the FAO GM Foods Platform

1. The FAO GM Foods Platform (<http://fao.org/gm-platform/>) is an online platform to share information on safety assessment of foods derived from recombinant-DNA plants authorized in accordance with the Codex "Guideline for the conduct of food safety assessment of foods derived from recombinant-DNA plants" (CAC/GL 45-2003, annex III adopted in 2008, available at http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/user_upload/gmfp/docs/CAC.GL_45_2003.pdf).
2. The FAO GM Foods Platform is open to the public. Countries should officially nominate one Focal Point to the platform through their Codex Contact Point. Only nominated Focal Points are allowed to register and upload relevant data and information.
3. Each country is responsible for the accuracy of the information submitted to the Platform. FAO is responsible for management of the Platform including checking the format of the submitted records.

Current status of the Platform

4. Since the official launch of the Platform in July 2013, a total of 138 Members¹ have nominated Focal Points for the Platform. Seventy-two Members have completed their country profile, and the Platform hosts 362 records of GM foods safety assessments (as of 20 May 2014).
5. If your country is not included in the footnoted list¹ the national Codex Contact Point would need to go through the nomination process. Communications should be sent via e-mail to gm-platform@fao.org to initiate the process. All countries are eligible to join the Platform community and invited to do so.

Evaluation of the Platform usage (July 2013 - June 2014)

¹ The following FAO Members have nominated their Focal Points to the Platform (as of 20 May 2014): Afghanistan, Algeria, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Belarus, Belgium, Belize, Benin, Bhutan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cambodia, Canada, Cape Verde, Chad, Chile, China, Colombia, Comoros, Congo, Cost Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, DRC Congo, Ecuador, El Salvador, Estonia, Ethiopia, European Union, Finland, France, Gabon, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Grenada, Guatemala, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Haiti, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kiribati, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lebanon, Liberia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Macedonia, Madagascar, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Mauritania, Mexico, Moldova, Mongolia, Montenegro, Morocco, Myanmar, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nigeria, Norway, Pakistan, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation, Rwanda, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, Somalia, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Swaziland, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand, Togo, Tonga, Trinidad and Tobago, Turkey, Uganda, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, United States of America, Uruguay, Uzbekistan, Venezuela, Viet Nam, Yemen and Zimbabwe.

6. The Platform community has been gradually expanding with new Members joining and uploading their information (Figure 1).

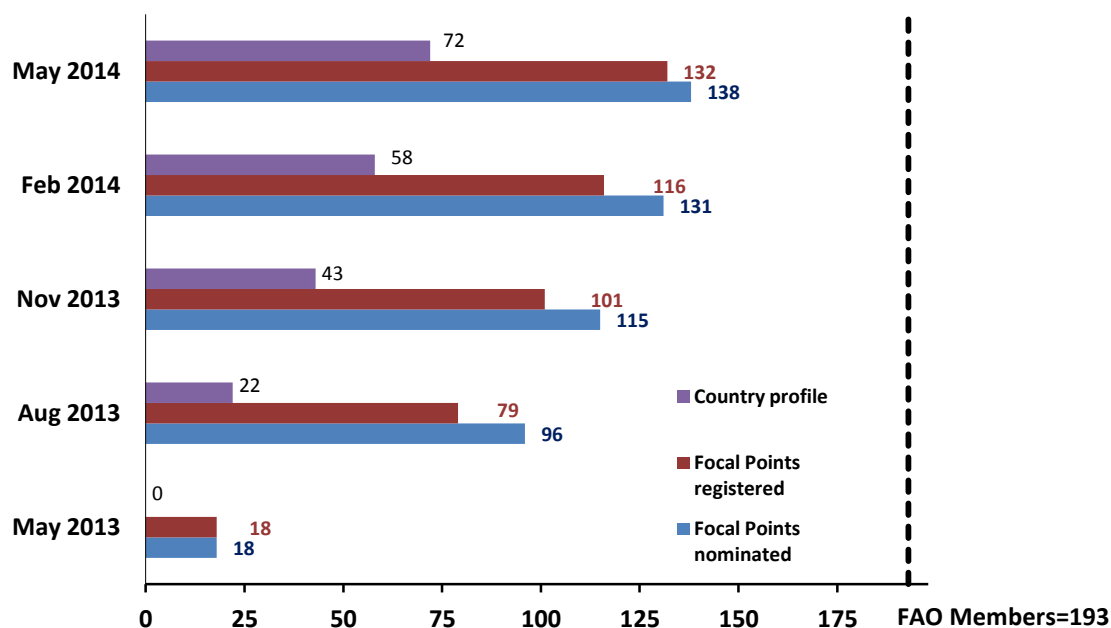


Figure 1. Progress of nomination, registration and country profile completion.

7. The FAO GM Foods Platform (<http://fao.org/gm-platform/>) homepage has been accessed by an average of slightly over 1,000 visitors per month between July 2013 and April 2014, as shown in the figure 2.
8. During the holiday month of December 2013, a slight decrease was observed, and during the month of March 2014, a jump in numbers accessing the platform was observed, possibly due to the increased awareness linked to a high-profile FAO event (FAO Technical Consultation on low levels of GM crops in international food and feed trade, 20-12 March 2014).

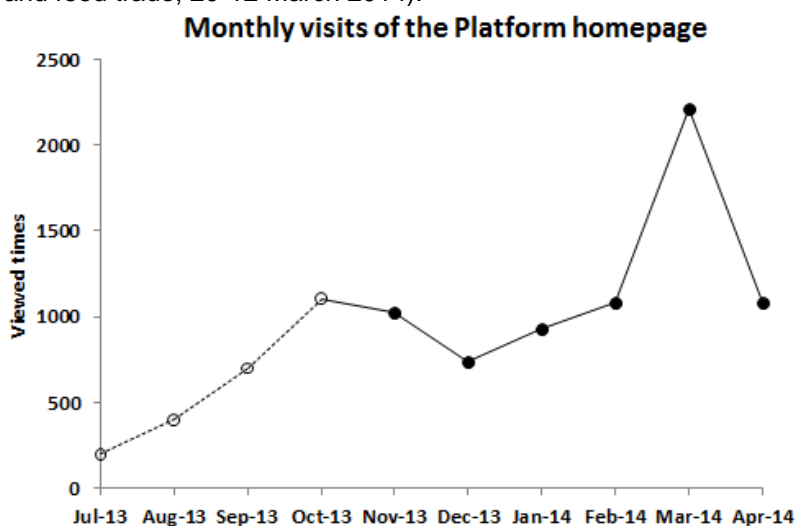


Figure 2. Monthly visits of the Platform home page

9. Registered members usage of the Platform has been assessed by looking at access to the “My work area” which is the space on the platform dedicated to officially nominated Focal points and their alternates. The “my work area” page has been accessed by an average of approximately 100 visitors per month between July 2013 and April 2014, as shown in the figure 3. The peak in December 2013 corresponds to the number of newly registered Focal Points.

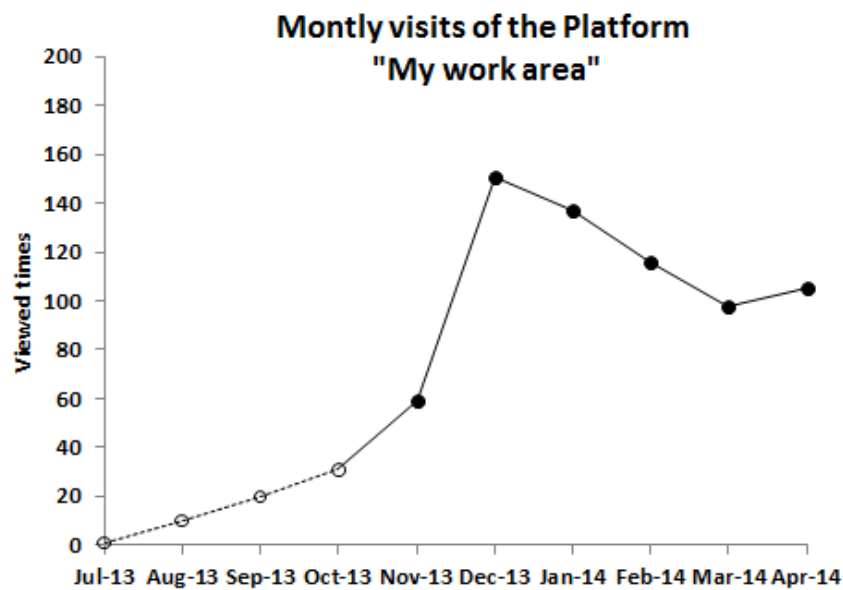


Figure 3. Monthly visits of the Platform "My work area"

10. These results show that in general, the Platform has been accessed by both registered and non-registered users and the number of visitors is constantly increasing. However, 1,000 visits per month by non-members and 100 visits per month by members can be interpreted as relatively few visits, compared to other international databases. In order to make the database more meaningful as a global source of information, it is critical that registered users in the first place continue to populate the Platform with relevant information. It can be anticipated that the more populated the Platform is the greater usage it will attract from the wider public. While high profile events on relevant topics can be used to increase visibility of the Platform, sustained increases in visitors will only be achieved through having a well-populated and data-rich Platform.

FAO activities in strengthening the Platform

11. FAO continues to improve the user interface of the Platform based on feedback and suggestions from the Platform community
12. Regular outreach to Codex Contact Points who have not yet nominated their Focal Points to the Platform is undertaken to assist the nomination process. Also monthly follow-up communications with nominated Focal Points are undertaken to support their active participation in the Platform community to share relevant data and information.
13. A monthly eNewsletter is disseminated to all registered Focal Points and Alternate Focal Points which includes latest news on the topic and upcoming events. All Codex Members are invited to subscribe the eNewsletter and can send an e-mail to gm-platform@fao.org for more details.
14. In 2014-15 FAO will continue its efforts in 1) promoting the active participation of the Focal Points in the Platform activities; 2) improving the usability of the Platform; and 3) improving the visibility of the Platform community at the global level. However, the success and completeness of the Platform largely depends on Members' efforts to share relevant data and information on the Platform. FAO encourage all Members to be part of the FAO GM Foods Platform community.

Establishment of informal support groups in the Platform community

15. Several Platform community members have expressed their needs for assistance in capacity development on technical issues, such as development of policy and regulatory frameworks, food safety assessment procedures, documentation protocols and sampling and testing of GMOs. To address such overarching capacity development needs related to the data and information to be shared on the Platform, FAO has proposed to establish informal support groups among the community members to facilitate interactive communication for their capacity development. FAO has received feedback from more than 8 countries (as of 20 May 2014) interested in piloting the idea of establishing such informal support groups. Email to gm-platform@fao.org for more information about the support groups.

Invitation to the side event on the Platform

16. FAO will convene a side event on the FAO GM Foods Platform at the occasion of the 37th session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission. All official delegations, Codex Members and Observers to the Commission are cordially invited to attend the side event, which will be held on Monday, 14 July, 2014, at 13:00 – 15:00 in Room 4 at the Centre International de Conférences Geneva (CICG). The side event will discuss the Platform progress as well as some key points highlighted at the FAO Technical Consultation on low levels of GM crops in international food and feed trade held in March 2014. Light lunch will be served.

Contact

17. For further information about the FAO GM Foods Platform (<http://fao.org/gm-platform/>), please contact Dr Masami Takeuchi, Food Safety Officer of FAO, at masami.takeuchi@fao.org or gm-platform@fao.org.