

Ministry Paper/2015

Food Safety and Global Gap Certification of Agro-Parks

1.0 Purpose

The matter for tabling is an update on Food Safety and Global Gap Certification of Agro-Parks.

2.0 Background

Food safety is an issue of growing importance due to several world-wide trends that contribute to increasing safety risks in food systems, such as the growing movement of people across borders; increased movement of agricultural and food products across borders; rapid urbanization; changes in food processing and handling practices; and the re-emergence/emergence of critical diseases, pathogens, toxins and other issues. Against this background, focus is being placed on the ability of all stakeholders in the food chain to be able to demonstrate adequate traceability of all food sources. Issues relating to food safety will therefore impact on agricultural production, agro-processing, food service industry, trade and commerce, public health and overall economic development.

3.0 Initiatives

3.1 Laboratory Accreditation

The Veterinary Services Division's laboratory support system is a critical component of the operation of the National Food Safety System. However, for international acceptance of food safety controls that are implemented, the laboratory must be duly accredited based on ISO 17025 standards.

Importance of ISO/IEC 17025 Accreditation

The major advantage of laboratory accreditation is that it ensures international acceptability of tests, thus facilitating trade. Additionally, accreditation enhances confidence in the products being marketed by local producers and processors both locally and internationally. Local consumers would also be exposed to more wholesome and safe fishery; meat and meat products.

There will be access to a pool of trained and updated cadre of laboratory scientists, technologists and chemical analysts in relevant laboratory techniques and protocols, aimed at guaranteeing product safety. Accreditation will also result in the introduction of new techniques and instalment of state of the art equipment to effectively and reliably undertake the laboratory support system activities.

In order to facilitate the process of acquisition of ISO 17025 Accreditation, the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, Veterinary Services Division has completed the following:

- Relevant laboratory protocols and procedures have been established.
- Both management and technical manuals are on the verge of completion.
- Refurbishing to buildings 95% completed.
- Generator procured, installed but not yet commissioned into service. Newly installed electrical panels, fittings, cables vandalized by criminals. Copper wiring stolen from cables. This has caused a delay in completion of major electrical upgrade being undertaken. Work currently underway to replace stolen and damaged cables and panels
- International Proficiency testing completed as per schedule for both laboratories (Microbiology and Residue & Biochemical Labs). 100% successful to date.
- New proficiency testing scheme identified and applied to for the 2015-2016 year.
- Quality Assurance activities conducted in line with ISO/IEC guidelines.
- Internal Audits completed and management review will be conducted prior to application for accreditation.
- Quality Manger post created and filled. This is a big plus toward the process of accreditation.
- Procurement of new state of the art analytical equipment such as the LC-MS (Liquid Chromatography mass spectrometry)
- Identified and arranged specialized job training for both VSDL and Residue & Biochemical Laboratory staff. Persons trained in various aspects of laboratory operation both locally and overseas.

3.2 Global Gap certification

The Ministry's Food Safety Committee will continue its work in improving the capacity of farmers and fresh produce exporters in being compliant with international food safety protocols, including the new Food Safety Modernization Act and to ensure continuous access of Jamaican foods to the USA, EU and other markets. Select Agro-parks will receive focused attention with respect to attaining Global Gap certification.

To this end, the Committee intends to:

- Build capacity for 1,000 farmers, 100 exporters, Ministry personnel and other stakeholders, in various international food safety quality management systems, such as HACCP and ISOs (International Organization for Standardization).
- Initiate the process of Global Gap certification of Agro-parks to involve employment of five food safety compliance officers (\$20m), infrastructure upgrade (\$45m), capacity building for Agro-park producers (\$15m) technical officers (\$10m) and engagement of the Global Gap inspection (\$10m).
- Produce and distribute Good Agricultural Practices (GAPs) and Good Manufacturing Practices (GMPs) manuals for farmers (crop, livestock, fish, apiculture) and exporters, respectively; and
- Create greater public awareness and education of all stakeholders as it relates to food safety.

3.3 National Animal Identification Traceability System

Work began on the establishment of National Animal Identification system in 2013. This was borne out of the need to satisfy numerous requirements under the Food Safety Modernization Act as well as to serve as a strategy for the prevention of theft and illegal slaughter of animals. Animal Identification, Registration and Traceability System (AIT- System) means the prevailing centrally coordinated integrated animal identification, registration and traceability system, including animal identification devices, animal identification coding systems, premises identification and registration, recording systems and a centralized database. The National Animal Identification System (NAITS) is geared towards the following:

- Establishment of AIT regulations, thereby making the identification of cattle mandatory;
- Provision of traceability of bovine animals from farm to slaughter;

- Identification and registration of bovine animals and establishments;
- Establishment of a central register;
- Establishment and maintenance of a computerized data base for cattle;
- Establishment of Movement Documents for farm animals.

In accordance with international and local food health and safety requirements and standards, the MOAF continued the process for the developing and implementing a strategic planning framework for the Abattoir Meat Science System in Jamaica. This will be pivotal in facilitating trade in the international meat market and supporting capacity building through teaching and certification in quality standards for meat production through public-private partnerships. Three main initiatives were identified to advance the process. These were: (a) implementation of a Local Abattoir Meat Science System; (b) National Animal Identification Traceability System for Cattle; and (c) the establishment of a Multispecies Abattoir through a public-private partnership.

Achievements to date

During 2014, the following developments were achieved:

- completion of a draft training curriculum for butchers and meat processors
- finalization of standards and protocols to guide the establishment of modern slaughter facilities in accordance with international requirements
- commencement of operation of the National Animal Identification and Traceability system (NAITS) database
- advancement of the tagging process for cattle

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