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GAIN Report

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POLICY

Voluntary Public

Date: 2/10/2012

GAIN Report Number:

China - Peoples Republic of

Post: Beijing

12th Five-year Plan on National Food Safety Standards

Report Categories:

National Plan

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Report Highlights:

On January 30, 2012, the Ministry of Health released the 12th Five-year Plan on National Food Safety Standards and is soliciting public comments on the Plan. The Plan reviews the status of the food safety standards and sets objectives for future food safety standard work and safeguard measures to fulfill the objectives.

Comments on the Plan can be faxed to the Supervision Bureau of the Ministry of Health at 86-10-68792408, or emailed to biaozhun@moh.gov.cn.

Deadline for submitting public comments is February 28, 2012.

This report is an INFORMAL translation of this document.

General Information:
BEGIN TRANSLATION

“The Twelfth Five-Year” Plan on National Food Safety Standards

Date of Issue: January 30, 2012

Issued by the Ministry of Health of the People’s Republic of China

“The Twelfth Five-Year” Plan on National Food Safety Standards
(Draft)

The plan is formulated in accordance with the *Food Safety Law* and its implementing regulations for the purposes of carrying out national food safety standard work and improving the standard system.

I. Status Quo of Food Safety Standards

(I) Achievements. As mandatory technical statutes, national food safety standards are important measures in safeguarding public health and food safety. They are the foundation of scientific administration of food safety and supervision over various links, as well as technical tools in regulating food production, sale, and promoting sound development of the industry. Governments of all levels and in all regions attach great significance to food safety standard formulation and revision. In recent years, China has made remarkable achievements in this regard. A food safety standard system has been established with national food safety standards at the core, supplemented by industrial standards, local standards and enterprise standards. There are now about 1900 national standards, over 1200 local standards and over 3100 industrial standards on food, food additive and food-related products.

After promulgation of the *Food Safety Law*, China made more effort on food safety standard work, and has made progresses of:

1. Improvement of the food safety national standards system. Relevant government agencies have published administrative measures on national food safety standards and local standards, and measures on putting on record of enterprise standards; they have clarified requirements on standards formulation, revision and administration. Ministry of Health established the Food Safety National Standards Evaluation Committee, a progress in the food safety national standard evaluation system.
2. Accelerated the review and integration of food standards. With emphasis, MOH streamlined and integrated food standards on grains, vegetable oil, meat products, milk and dairy products, alcoholic liquors, spices and beverages. MOH cancelled or modified some standards and indices, and appropriately handled problems of overlapping, repetitive and conflicting food standards.
3. Promulgation of new national food safety standards. After promulgation of the *Food Safety Law*, MOH released 185 national food safety standards covering milk, food additive application, compound food additive, fungi and toxin limit, prepackaged food label and nutriment label, pesticide residue limits and some food additives. MOH also revised the standards on food packing materials, which is more scientific and practical.
4. Promote smooth implementation of national food safety standards. (Relevant agencies) Actively engage in publicity and training on national food safety standards, track evaluation of implemented standards, and guide the food industry to strictly follow the implemented new standards.
5. China is actively involved in formulation of the international food codex. China is the host country of Codex Committee on Food Additives and Codex Committee on Pesticide Residues; it is elected Asian Executive Member of Codex Committee on Food; it hosted the international conferences on food additive codex and pesticide residue codex. Through all these, we learned the experiences (of developed countries) in formulation and management of food standards.

(II) Problem and restraints. In recent years, food safety standards could not match development of the food industry, and standard formulated is restrained by risk assessment capacity and standard research/development. As a result, some problems emerge, mainly as follows:

1. The standard system needs to be further streamlined. Before issuance of the *Food Safety Law*, different ministries, pursuant to their portfolio, formulated national and industrial standards on agricultural product quality safety, food hygiene and food quality. Numerous standards co-exist, some overlap in content, some issues remain unaddressed, and some standards were inconsistent with others.
2. Failure of food safety supervision caused by lack of some key standards or important indices. For instance, China lacks standards on some detection methods and food packing materials.
3. Scientific basis and reasonableness of the standard needs to be further improved. Many food safety standards were issued a long time ago, which lack generality; some standard indices lack risk assessment. As a result, they could not match of food safety supervision requirements and industry development.
4. Publicity, training and implementation of standards need to be strengthened. Food safety standards are voluminous in indices, technical in content, highly compulsory in execution, and they attract close social attention. Therefore, it requires further improvement in standards administration and working procedures. China will improve methods of soliciting and collecting opinions, and better publicize and interpret standards.

Restraints of national food safety standards are as follows:

1. Basic research lags behind; risk assessment is still in early stage; insufficient data storage of food safety exposure evaluation and backward monitoring and evaluating techniques.
2. Safeguarding mechanism needs to be established and improved. For the moment, China lacks a full-time technical organization for national food safety standard work; lacking people engage in food safety standard work and insufficient funds hinders standard formulation and revision work.
3. China needs to cultivate a standard team. Because of insufficient and scattered professionals, basic research on food safety standard is weak in China.

II. Guiding Ideology, Basic Principle and Objectives

(I) Guiding Ideology. With Deng Xiaoping Theory and the important thought of "Three Represents" as a guide, thoroughly implement the scientific outlook on development, faithfully implement *Food Safety Law* and its implementing regulations, adhere to the principle of "prevention foremost, scientific management", actively absorb international experiences on the basis of food safety risk assessment, and speed up the streamlining and integration of food standards in China, formulate and improve national food safety standards, try to improve the scientific basis & practicality of the standards, and build up the system of national food safety standards safeguarding the health of the people in conformity with the situation of China overall.

(II) Basic Principles.

1. Protect public health at the core. The legislative aim of the *Food Safety Law* should be reflected in national food safety standards. Standard items and indices should cover food safety requirements that are closely related to health of people.

2. Risk assessment as the scientific basis. National food safety standards should be formulated on the basis of food safety risk assessment. Design of standards shall emphasize potential food safety risks for human health.

3. Standard formulation based on situation in China. National food safety standards should be formulated in compliance with situation in China and development of the food industry. Standards shall take into consideration actual conditions of

relevant industries, requirements of standard supervision and continuous improvement of people's living, as well as operation of standards.

4. Adhere to the principle of openness and transparency. Improve standard administration; by expanding scope and methods of collecting comments, China encourages the general public, legal persons and other organizations to take part in national food safety standard formulation and revision.

(III) Main Objectives.

—Review and integrate existing food standards. By 2015, complete review and integration of mandatory content in edible agricultural product quality safety standards, food hygiene standards, food quality standards and industry standards; solve the problems of overlapping, repetitious and conflicting contents in different standards.

—Increase formulation and revision of national food safety standards. Improve generality, scientific baseis and applicability of national food safety standards. China aims to establish a national food safety standard system that is in conformity with its situation, industrial development and food safety supervision.

—Improve the administration of national food safety standards. China plans to establish an administration mechanism featuring regulated / open and transparent procedures, which is guided by the government and participated in by the entire society.

—Strengthen standards publicity and implementation. Relevant government agencies shall launch publicity/trainings to promote learning and implementation of national food safety standards; they will ensure faithful implementation of national food safety standards in food production and distribution.

III. Tasks

(I) Review and integrate existing food standards in an all-around way. (MOH) shall review mandatory content in edible agricultural product quality safety standards, food hygiene standards, food quality standards and industry standards; by this, (MOH) will solve the problems of overlapping, repetitive and conflicting standards.

(MOH) will compare and analyze food safety indices and mandatory quality indices, determine principles and methods before carrying out the review work. By the end of 2013, (MOH) plans to review mandatory contents in the 1900 national food safety standards and 3000 industrial standards. Based on the review work, (MOH) will 1) bring forward opinions whether the standards or indices shall remain effective, to be integrated or annulled; and 2) complete integration and elimination of relevant standards by the end of 2015.

(II) Increase formulation and revision of basic food safety standards. Following the principle of “review and improving the standards simultaneously”, (MOH) will accelerate formulation and revision of national food safety standards by learning from foreign counterparts; with these, (MOH) will improve the Chinese food safety standards, and solve the problems of lacking important food safety standards and inconsistent standards.

(MOH) will lay emphasis on formulation and revision of basic food safety standards, including limits of harmful substances (pollutant, bio-toxin and pathogenic microbe of food), food additive and food-related products, limit of pesticide and veterinary medicine residue, food additive use, food labeling and food safety glossary and classification.

By the end of 2015, (MOH) will revise limit standards of food pollutant, bio-toxin, pesticide and veterinary medicine residue; it will revise the standards on food additive use, food additive products and food labeling; (MOH) will formulate standards on food safety glossary and classification; it will define pathogenic microbe limit standards of food, formulate instructive requirement on microbe control in food producing and distribution process, establish fast food microbe standards for the catering industry, and scientifically indicate microbe indices and limits of food product; (MOH) will improve relevant standards on materials of food vessels, packaging and processing equipment, and improve food-related standards on the use of food vessels and packages.

(III) Improve regulations on food production and operation. MOH will formulate and revise regulations and standards on food production and operation for the purposes of strengthening safety control in food production and operation; it will

tighten requirements on raw material, production, transportation, storage and hygiene management; in addition, MOH wish to prevent and control food safety risk by regulating food production and operations.

By the end of 2015, (MOH) plans to formulate over 20 national food safety standards, including sanitary regulations for food and food additive producers, operators and catering service providers, which will cover the entire process of food production, operation and catering service. In addition, MOH plans to further break down the requirements and criteria on food pollution control in food production and operation in accordance with food category, production / operation mode and other features.

(IV) Reasonably set up food products safety standards. Taking into consideration of product characteristics and potential risks, (MOH) will, after risk assessment, set limits on harmful substances in food that are not covered by basic food standards; it will also set mandatory quality indices that are related to food safety. The standards shall cover food materials and products with large consumption volume.

By the end of 2015, (MOH) will formulate and revise standards of primary food products, such as meat, aquatic products, grains, edible grease, alcoholic liquor, spices, bean products and beverages. (MOH) will take into consideration generality and coverage of the standards, and avoid overlapping and repetition in different standards.

(V) Establish and improve standards on food testing methods. MOH will formulate and revise standards on testing methods pursuant to limit indices in national food safety standards.

By the end of 2015, MOH will formulate and revise, with priority, standard indices of various pollutants, microbes, pesticides, veterinary medicine residue and food additives, as well as standards of testing methods for packing materials; it will further improve standards on toxicological safety evaluation procedures and detecting methods.

(IV) Improve administration of national food safety standards, so that national food safety standards are scientific, reasonable, safe and reliable.

By the end of 2012, MOH will issue relevant statutes regulating tracking and evaluating of national food safety standards. By the end of 2013, China will improve administration mechanism and working procedures addressing formulation, revision, opinion solicitation, standard assessment, assessment commission management and national food safety standard issuance. All these will guarantee open and transparent standard-related work.

(VII) Strengthen publicity, communication and implementation of national food safety standards. For the purpose of promoting implementation of national food safety standards, MOH will reinforce publicity, training, counseling, and tracking/appraisal work after promulgation of national food safety standards. It will emphasize publicity of national food safety standards and science popularization, in particular standards that are highly technical and are attracting public attention. MOH will improve the procedures for standard application, enquiry and interpretation, set up procedures for handling food safety standard incidents, and timely answer standard-related questions. MOH will encourage industries and enterprises to actively implement national food safety standards; it will motivate supervising authorities to supervise food safety. MOH will carry out tracking and appraisal of national food safety standards to identify problems in standard implementation, and at an appropriate time to revise national food safety standards.

(VIII) Carry out studies on national food safety standards. MOH will carry out basic studies on food safety standard systematically to make standards more scientific and practical.

By the end of 2015, MOH will:

- 1) Complete the study on application of risk assessment principles in food safety standard formulation;
- 2) Complete the study that tracks and compares international food safety standards;
- 3) Complete study on design of indices system of microbes in food; and
- 4) Complete the study on principles of using major functional food additives.

The research results shall be applied in standard work.

(IX) Get more involved in international food codex affairs. Based on its need to develop the Chinese national food safety standard system, China will actively take part in the work of Codex Committee on Food, which is a chance for China

to learn and absorb advanced food standard management experiences. Such involvement in formulation and revision of international food codex standards also safeguards China's interest in food trade.

By 2015, China will fully participate in various activities of the Codex Committee on Food; it will timely track standard work of food codex. China will participate in or take lead in formulation/revision of international food standards and technical exchanges that are closely related to interests of China in food trade. China will, in a continuous manner, improve its work as the host country and Asian executive member of the Codex Committee on Food Additive and the Codex Committee on Pesticide Residue.

IV. Safeguard Measures

(I) Establish a national food safety standards coordination and cooperation working mechanism. China will establish a consultation mechanism of national food safety standards, which is comprised of the National Reform and Development Commission (NDRC), the Ministry of Science and Technology (MOST), the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology (MIIT), the Ministry of Finance (MOF), the Ministry of Agriculture (MOA), the Ministry of Commerce (MOFCOM), the Ministry of Health (MOH), State Administration of Industry and Commerce (SAIC), State Administration of Quality Supervision and Quarantine (AQSIQ), State Administration of Grain, State Food and Drug Administration (SFDA), National Standards Committee, Certification and Accreditation Administration (CNCA) and the State Council Food Safety Office. The mechanism will study key issues in development of the national food safety standards system. They would coordinate and carry out tasks assigned, break down the tasks specified in the Plan, clarify objectives/responsible agencies; these will facilitate task implementation and supervision.

(II) Specify and assign responsibilities to relevant government departments and industries. Developing the system of national food safety standards requires cooperation of various government departments, and each must fulfill its assigned duties. The Ministry of Health shall take lead in implementing the Plan, it will organize the review, formulation and revision of the standards. Food supervisory authorities are responsible for reviewing and submitting proposals for updating national and industrial food standards that are under their jurisdiction; they shall provide routine monitoring / supervising / inspection data, and urge relevant industries and enterprises to follow national food safety standards in their production and operation. Industry authorities shall initiatively take part in and cooperate with the standard system construction, cooperate with standard formulation / revision / publicity, and guide industries to follow the standards.

(III) Increase input into national food safety standard system. Establishment and improvement of the system, featuring voluminous work, need funding support. The central government will continuously increase funds channeled for formulation and revision of national food safety standards, with emphasis on key standards specified in the Plan. While guaranteeing sufficient investment, the fund use should be strictly monitored for efficiency and regulation compliance. In establishing technical platforms for various types of standards, it is suggested to make full use of existing research institutions and industrial organizations of food safety standards. Such institutions and organizations are encouraged to participate in formulation, revision, publicity and technical consulting of the standards.

(IV) Cultivate talented people for food safety standard work. Establish the National Food Safety Risk Assessment Center and the Secretariat of National Assessment Committee of Food Safety Standards. China would attract more leading talents to engage in food safety standards; the number of professionals will be increased to strengthen the food safety standard team. China will strengthen training for professionals in key scientific R&D colleges, universities and technical institutions. In addition, China will build a large team of competent experts that engage in standard development, who will carry out formulation and revision of food safety standards.

(V) Supervise implementation of tasks. (Relevant government agencies) will timely organize inspection and assessment of tasks required by the Plan. By strengthening supervision and evaluation, relevant agencies will guarantee implementation of each task. At the same time, they would timely, dynamically and scientifically adjust the Plan pursuant to requirements on food safety supervision and standard management.

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