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China Issues 13th Five-Year Plan on Food Safety

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Report Highlights:

On February 21, China's State Council issued the 13th Five-Year Plan on Food Safety. The Plan provides a review the status of China's food safety during the 12th Five-year Plan Period (2011-2015). It also lays out four key objectives, including aligning Chinese standards with international standards. Regarding the oversight of food import and exports, the Plan pledges to launch a food safety risk alert system and a food importer/exporter reputation recording mechanism. This report contains a summary of the Plan's most salient points and a link to the full text.

China's State Council 13th Five-Year Plan on Food Safety Relevant Points Summary

On February 21, the State Council issued the 13th Five-Year Plan on Food Safety. The Plan first reviews the status of China's food safety during the 12th Five-year Plan Period (2011-2015). The overview confirms achievement and progress. It also acknowledges that problems still exist due to the contamination of input sources (environmental pollution, inappropriate use of agricultural inputs, etc.). Challenges still remain given the vast number of small-sized producers, absent food safety standards, and insufficient regulatory/enforcement capacity.

According to the Plan's overview, by the end of the 12th Five-year Plan period, there were 135,000 food producing enterprises, 8.19 million circulating enterprises, and 3.48 million catering service providers. Revenue from the above-scale enterprises reached 11.35 trillion Yuan (\$1.65 trillion), with a year-on-year growth of 12.5 percent. Also during that period, food imports and exports increased in value by 23.9 percent.

The Plan reports that during the last five years, China's food safety regulatory system has continuously improved. The State Council established the Food Safety Commission as the coordinator for food safety issues among relevant ministries. It reorganized the China Food Safety Administration by integrating the food safety regulatory offices from the previous State Administration of Industry and Commerce (SAIC) and the General Administration of Quality Supervision, Inspection and Quarantine (AQSIQ). Chinese lawmakers promulgated and revised two dozen laws and regulations, including the Food Safety Law. In addition, the National Health and Family Planning Commission (previously called the Ministry of Health, MOH) completed its review of food standards, and the Ministry of Agriculture (MOA) issued 2,800 limits for pesticides residues in foods.

The Plan sets forth the following primary objectives:

1. Enhance sample testing to cover all types of food;
2. Effective governance of resource contamination;
3. Reinforce on-site inspections: establish a professional inspector team and standardize enforcement procedures and documentation;
4. Align Chinese food safety standards with international standards.

China will establish a database that covers food safety standards developed by CODEX and other countries, conduct research and comparison of foreign and global standards. Specifically, China will work to continuously improve the food safety standard system by developing or updating no less than 300 national standards; develop/update/assess confer 6,600 maximum residue limits (MRL) for pesticides; and 270 residue limits for veterinary drugs. By the end of the 13th Five-year Plan period (2020), the national food safety standard system will cover all foods consumed (including agricultural products and dietary foods for the special population groups). The Plan reveals that China will develop no less than 20 key limit standards for pesticides and vet drugs; and no less than five standards for new toxicities and contaminants.

In addition, the Plan outlines that efforts will be made to construct a comprehensive legislative system with the Food Safety Law at its core. China will also revise the Agricultural Product Quality and Safety

Law, the Implementing Rules of the Food Safety Law, Administrative Rules for Pesticides, Administrative Rules for Quality and Safety of Dairy Products, support the promulgation of the Soil Pollution Prevention and Rectification Laws, the Grains Law, and the Administrative Rules for Chemical Fertilizer etc. China will also develop/revise a variety of regulations on food labeling, food safety incident investigation, information disclosure, whole-process traceability, etc.

The Plan vows for stricter oversight of special foods. Regarding health foods, China will drive forward the reform of health food registration and record keeping, improve the function catalogue and adjust the statement of functions. Relevant authorities will develop the catalogue of health food materials, a list of allowed/prohibited substances in health foods. CFDA will rigorously carry out the registration of foods for special medical purposes (FSMP) and infant formula recipes. China plans to establish a professional reviewer team to guarantee timely technical review of the registration applications.

Regarding the oversight of food import and export, the Plan pledges to launch a food safety risk alert system and a food importer/exporter reputation recording mechanism. It will also reinforce inspections of foreign food safety regulatory systems. Chinese authorities will improve quality and safety inspections and testing of imported and exported food; formulate plans for sample testing and risk surveillance. China will continue its strict registration of overseas food manufacturing establishments, and will reinforce inspection and oversight on foods imported via cross-border e-commerce.

It is worth noting that the Plan reveals that China will conduct assessments and retrospective reviews of the food safety regulatory systems of the 50 major countries that export foods to China.

In order to prevent food safety incidents and violations, the Plan announced that China will improve the list of non-food-use substances that might be illegally added to foods, list of prohibited/restricted pesticides, veterinary drugs and other compounds prohibited from use on animals for human consumption.

One of the major goals of the Plan is the creation of a professional food safety inspector team by clarifying required qualifications, responsibilities, trainings, performance reviews, etc. Efforts will be made to provide training to inspectors, compile training materials, and establish training bases. The plan calls to take effective measures to encourage staff (inspectors) to move to the frontline of the food safety regulatory system.

Concerning international cooperation, the Plan pledges that Chinese regulators will work with regulators in developed countries and experts in key international organizations. China will actively participate in the formulation of international rules and standards and join global efforts in response to food safety incidents. China will also contribute to the improvement of food safety governance; Chinese experts are also encouraged to take on positions at food-related international organizations.

Full text of the 13th Five-year Plan for Food Safety could be found at:

<http://www.cfda.gov.cn/WS01/CL0852/169745.html>. This link also provides the 13th Five-year Plan for Drug Safety.