

Meat Importers & Traders Association



Summary of the Meeting: Development of the Philippine National Standard (PNS) on Judgement of Equivalence of Food Inspection and Certification Systems -Guidelines

Date: June 24, 2025

Venue: Google Meet

Overview

The meeting focused on developing the Philippine National Standard (PNS) for Equivalence Agreements related to food import and export inspection and certification systems. This initiative supports the Department of Agriculture's (DA) goals of enhancing food security and advancing the agriculture and fishery sectors. Key objectives include improving market access, aligning with international standards, and balancing developmental and regulatory functions. The PNS provides practical guidance for entering bilateral or multilateral agreements. Its development involves stakeholder consultations, Technical Working Group (TWG) meetings, and integration of feedback into the final draft.

Goals of the Meeting

- Present a summary of key inputs and recommendations.
- Incorporate stakeholder feedback into the draft PNS.
- Convene a follow-up TWG meeting to discuss stakeholder inputs.
- Finalize and deliberate on the revised draft in subsequent TWG meetings.

Meeting Outline

Opening Remarks

- Alpha Lanuza welcomed participants, emphasized the importance of the consultation, and acknowledged the contributions of the TWG and inbox management team.
- The consultation was formally opened, and the floor was turned over to the Standards Development Division (SDD).

Project Overview and Strategy

- Speaker 1 provided an overview of the PNS on Equivalence Agreements, in line with DA's food security and development agenda.

- The SDD outlined current challenges, strategic actions, and the involvement of 12 DA agencies.
- The project is mandated under the Food Safety Act of 2013 and emphasizes science-based, risk-informed food safety standards.

Timeline and Objectives

- Stephanie Marie Rada presented the development timeline, including identification of Codex guidelines in 2021 and expected adoption in 2025.
- The PNS aims to guide competent authorities in establishing equivalence agreements and promote regulatory harmonization.

Development Process and Consultation

- The SDD described the process, which includes initial and final stakeholder consultations and TWG meetings.
- Comments and suggestions will be reviewed by the TWG, with editorial decisions handled by SDD management unless substantive changes are required.

Scope and References

- Olivia Pungtilan outlined the PNS scope, covering bilateral and multilateral equivalence agreements for primary and postharvest food inspection and certification.
- Judith Platero cited normative references from the Codex Alimentarius Commission and BAFS guidelines.

Terms and Definitions

- Benelyn Dumelod presented key definitions (e.g., audit, inspection, certification system), based on Codex and BAFS guidelines.

Purpose and Types of Agreements

- Christiane Fatimah Decena explained the purpose of equivalence agreements—to ensure product conformity, optimize resources, and facilitate trade.
- Both bilateral and multilateral agreements were discussed, with emphasis on not making them a condition for trade.

Pre-Engagement Considerations

- Stephanie Marie Rada discussed key factors before initiating agreements, including public health risks, trade volume, infrastructure, compliance capacity, and readiness of competent authorities.
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Initiating Discussions

- The process includes identifying trading partners, setting priorities, and ensuring WTO compliance.
- Authorities must be prepared to support assessment and verification activities.

Consultative Process

- Emphasized transparency, role of liaison officers, dispute resolution mechanisms, and procedures for agreement entry, review, and termination.

Pilot Studies and Annex

- Judith Platero highlighted pilot studies and annex content, including certification criteria, sampling methods, administrative processes, and transparency measures.

Stakeholder Engagement and Next Steps

- The SDD encouraged feedback on the draft.
- TWG meetings will incorporate comments, leading to the final consultation and draft PNS presentation.

Post-Break Session Summary

The meeting resumed with further discussions on the initial stakeholder consultation for the PNS on equivalence agreements. Participants included government agencies, private sector representatives, and academia. Key agenda points covered scope, references, definitions, and recommendations, such as removing redundant terms and conducting pilot studies.

Participants

- Mikaella David introduced representatives from BAI, BFAR, BPI, NDA, NMIS, and private sector organizations like SGS Philippines and MITA.
- Academic institutions such as UP Diliman were also represented.

Agenda Highlights

- Review of clauses on scope, references, definitions, and types of agreements.
- Consultative process, pilot studies, and implementation discussed.
- Focus on refining the draft PNS through collaborative input.

Recommendations and Next Steps

- Recommendations included removing redundant terms and refining sub-clauses.
- Proposed activities: pilot studies, agreement drafting, and implementation planning.
- Key upcoming dates:
 - 5th TWG Meeting: July 15, 2025
 - Final Stakeholder Consultation: July 29, 2025
 - Finalization of Draft PNS: August 2025

Evaluation and Closing

- Participants were asked to complete the evaluation form for certificate issuance.
- Dr. Olivia Pungtilan thanked participants and emphasized the value of feedback.
- Reminders were given for the July 29 consultation and for participants to invite other stakeholders.

KEY NOTES

Regarding the draft PNS on the Development of Equivalence Agreements for Food Import and Export Inspection and Certification Systems – Guidelines, there appear to be no provisions that would adversely affect meat imports.

These provisions are valuable when engaging with government agencies, as they support the implementation of science- and rules-based protocols in the event of policy or procedural changes. It is also worth noting that jowls were previously removed from the offals category.

Please refer to the document: [FINAL INITIAL DRAFT] For Initial SC PNS- Development of Equivalence Import Export

3.13

requirements

criteria set by the competent authorities relating **to trade in foodstuffs covering the protection of public health, the protection of consumers, and conditions of fair trading** (DA-BAFS, 2023, modified)

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6.2 When importing and/or exporting relevant products, competent authorities may need to establish priorities for consultations leading to development of agreements in recognition of the limited resources available to conduct the necessary assessments. Such priorities should not conflict with World Trade Organization (WTO) rights and obligations.

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