

Maximum Residue Limits (MRL) Policy Team



IGTC
International Grain Trade Coalition



June 2022 Briefing Document

Maximum Residue Limits (MRLs) for crop protection products are a growing cause of trade disruption for grains, oilseeds and agri-bulks. Barriers created by inconsistent, unjustified and unevenly applied MRLs create risk and can have negative consequences for farmers, exporters, importers and consumers. There has been increasing demand for a global collaborative effort to tackle this issue and create an environment that is more supportive of trade.

Attention to MRLs is increasing in various global venues such as the World Trade Organization (WTO) through the 25th anniversary of the Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (SPS Agreement) approaches. Other important venues have been the Interamerican Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA), the Eastern Africa Community (EAC), and the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC).

The MRL Policy Team consists of 57 Members drawn from IGTC's Members and Corporate Stakeholders. It is currently co-chaired by GAFTA (June Arnold) and EAGC (Kimwaga Mhando). It is responsible for developing a common position, advocacy strategy and an action plan IGTC's advocacy on MRLs. Reporting to the Management Council (MC), the Policy Team guides IGTC's efforts to ensure MRLs do not impede the movement of grain.

The MRL Policy Team's function includes the following:

- I. Analyze the regulatory environment to determine existing and potential barriers to the movement of grain as a result of domestic and international MRL policies as well as upcoming changes to domestic policies in key markets that may result in impediments to trade.
- II. Review opportunities for MRL policy modernization including Codex reform, deferral to international standards, domestic policy reviews in key markets and recognition of scientific standards and develop recommendations for IGTC positions.
- III. Review the positions of, and materials prepared by, IGTC members. Leverage previously prepared materials to develop IGTC documents.
- IV. Consider existing forum, coalitions, etc. that advocate MRL policy modernization and recommend to MC if IGTC should support/join these initiatives.
- V. Identify gaps that exist in policy development and advocacy where IGTC can play a leadership role, including through the creation of a global coalition and/or binding agreement on the recognition of scientific standards and taking a proactive approach to regulatory approvals for key products in key markets.

▶ Advocacy in multilateral environments and like-minded groups

IGTC continues to support awareness raising in international venues when relevant. WTO remains a key venue with country-led work taking place at both the SPS and TBT committees, as well as the Goods Council. Key will be “MC12”, the 12th Ministerial Conference of WTO scheduled for June 2022. IGTC is in favor of an initiative tabled at the WTO’s SPS Committee which calls for MC12 backing of “harmonized SPS measures, including on maximum residue limits for veterinary drugs and pesticides”, as well as making important references to Codex Alimentarius, transparent SPS measures, scientific principles, risk assessment, the spread of plant pests and diseases, sustainable intensification of agricultural production and trade. As of the WTO’s 2022 SPS Committee, the Declaration had 100 government signatories.

▶ Advocacy in multilateral environments and like-minded groups

IGTC is one of 29 agri-value chain members, administered and led by the International Agri-Food Network (IAFN). The IAFN Coalition is working with the Codex Secretariat, as well as Codex members to increase capacity and push for more efficient decision making particularly on continuing to set international MRLs important for agricultural trade and we strongly advocated on the need to prioritise the approval of 400 MRL approvals during CCPR in 2020 and also in 2021 meetings. Trade facilitation is one of the key components of the IAFN position paper. The IAFN Coalition has benefitted from Bryant Christie reviews of its work. An overview of the IAFN “asks” for Codex enhancement is as follows:

1. Increase availability of scientific experts
2. Secure consistent budgetary resources
3. Reduce the delay between registration of a compound and establishment of a Codex MRL
4. Increase use of crop grouping and representative commodities
5. Strengthen implementation of JMPR and CCPR procedures and more efficient communication
6. Elevate the trade perspective at Codex

REFERENCES

IGTC policy document: <https://bit.ly/3MGjtSA>
 Volume 2 of USITC report on MRLs (March 2021): <https://bit.ly/388EaxM>
 WTO SPS Committee report (November 2021): <https://bit.ly/3yNiHz4>
 WTO Negotiating Group on Trade and Environment report (November 2021) : <https://bit.ly/3MAyZPM>
 Organization of African, Caribbean and Pacific States (OACPS) Ministerial statement, including a section on agriculture (November 2021) <https://bit.ly/3wAAWGs>
 WTO SPS draft Ministerial statement for MC12 in December 2021 : <https://bit.ly/3yTryiS>
 IAFN advocacy letter 2020 in response to WTO statement on MRL delays and the need for increased capacity at Codex Alimentarius (IGTC endorsed and signed): <https://bit.ly/3yTq7kj>
 WTO Thematic session on MRLs Public Recording (March 2022): <https://bit.ly/3wECOha>
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