



# NATIONAL FOOD SAFETY POLICY

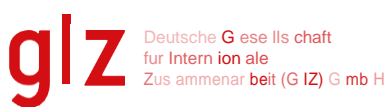




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## FOREWORD

As Minister of Health and Sports, one of my key objectives is the protection of consumer health. The food we eat each day contributes significantly to our health and wellbeing. It is therefore vital that consumers are assured that the food they consume is safe to eat. Consumers may be impacted by the consumption of unsafe foods and can suffer immediate acute adverse health effects or in some cases more silent long-term chronic effects.

At a national level, responsibility for control of food safety within the Republic of the Union of Myanmar falls under a number of government bodies. It is important that all such bodies regulate in an effective, harmonised and consistent manner to ensure that all group of consumers, young and old, throughout the country are protected.

The National Food Safety Policy for the Republic of the Union of Myanmar is a vital progressive step towards strengthening the food safety control system within our country. This framework document sets down key principles under which the relevant government bodies shall establish appropriate rules to conduct and monitor their important work of ensuring that food business operators follow internationally recognised food safety principles and practices at all stages throughout the food chain. The strategic goals and actions plans for our national food control system shall be developed under these principles.

I am grateful for the support of all the relevant public and private sector stakeholders throughout the policy development and consultation stages. I look forward to working closely with all in implementing this policy as the Republic of the Union of Myanmar moves forward as a prosperous agri-food producing nation capably of trading on the world stage.

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<b>ASEAN:</b>	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
<b>CDC:</b>	City Development Committee
<b>DOA:</b>	Department of Agriculture
<b>DOF:</b>	Department of Fisheries
<b>DOH:</b>	Department of Health
<b>FAO:</b>	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
<b>FDA:</b>	Food and Drug Administration
<b>GDP:</b>	Gross Domestic Product
<b>GSP:</b>	Generalised Scheme of Preferences
<b>LBVD:</b>	Livestock Breeding & Veterinary Department
<b>MCDC:</b>	Mandalay City Development Committee
<b>MOALI:</b>	Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation
<b>MOC:</b>	Ministry of Commerce
<b>MOHS:</b>	Ministry of Health and Sport
<b>MOHA:</b>	Ministry of Home Affairs
<b>MOPFI:</b>	Ministry of Planning, Finance and Industry
<b>NCDC:</b>	Nay Pyi Taw City Development Committee
<b>OIE:</b>	World Organisation for Animal Health
<b>PH:</b>	Public Health
<b>PPD:</b>	Plant Protection Division
<b>SPS:</b>	Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures
<b>TBT:</b>	Technical Barriers to Trade
<b>WHO:</b>	World Health Organization
<b>YCDC:</b>	Yangon City Development Committee

The Republic of the Union of Myanmar, strategically located at the crossroads of Asia, possesses abundant natural resources, a young population, a sizable market with wide-ranging investment opportunities and has strong potential for broad economic expansion (Ref. 1). Its union government is actively engaged in building a new, modern, peaceful, developed and democratic nation. Currently agriculture and the agri-food business sectors make an important contribution to the national economy in the country and dependency on employment in the agriculture sector remains as high as 70%. Within the food sector, edible oil and rice industries constitute about two-thirds of the country's total industry composition (Ref. 2). The World Bank estimates that the agriculture sector accounts for 38% of national GDP and 23% of exports (Ref. 3).

The potential for broad economic expansion in member states of the Association of South East Asia Nations (ASEAN), of which the Republic of the Union of Myanmar is a member, is widely recognised by ASEAN government leader and at government union level within the Republic of the Union of Myanmar. Opportunities exist for expansion within sectors such as agriculture and food, tourism and energy at both domestic and export levels. The lifting of sanctions and restoration of the GSP status, by the EU Commission, has presented the Republic of the Union of Myanmar with new and exciting opportunities in many areas in particular for the agri-food sector (Ref. 4).

As a member of ASEAN, the Union Government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar are committed to contributing to the achievement of the goals of the ASEAN Economic Community Blueprint 2025, in achieving an integrated and highly cohesive ASEAN economy (Ref. 5). In particular, the Ministry of Health and Sports within the Union Government shares the ASEAN vision of developing the food and agriculture sectors to be competitive, inclusive, resilient and fully integrated with the global economy with the goal of ensuring food security, food safety and better nutrition (Ref. 5).

Developing the food and agriculture sectors to be 'competitive, inclusive, resilient and fully integrated with the global economy while ensuring the safety of food' is ambitious yet achievable through an integrated multi governmental approach. All progress made towards achieving this goal will contribute to other government policy objectives such as the objectives of the Ministry of Health and Sports to protect the health of consumers by making 'communicable diseases no longer public health problems, aiming towards total eradication or elimination and also to reduce the magnitude of other health problems' (Ref. 6) and the Ministry of Hotels and Tourism's policy objective of 'Ensuring health, safety and security of visitors' through enforcing health, hygiene and sanitation standards for service providers (Ref. 7). In addition, this policy will contribute to achieving elements of the Myanmar Sustainable Development Plan (2018-2030), in particular to 'improving food safety standards to protect human health and extract greater values from agriculture, aquaculture, livestock and related exports elements' (Ref. 8).

As a step toward achieving the objectives mentioned above, the Ministry of Health and Sports is focused on strengthening the national food safety control system within the Republic of the Union of Myanmar. As an initial step, the Ministry of Health and Sports has developed this 'National Food Safety Policy' which adopts the 'farm to fork' food chain approach and which provides strategic direction and sets down the union government's overall vision for the protection consumers' health and for facilitating food trade. This policy is aligned with the principles set out in the wider ASEAN Food Safety Policy (Ref. 9) and the ASEAN Principles and Guidelines for National Food Control Systems (Ref. 10). The principles of this policy aim to facilitate the development of a sustainable and robust food safety regulatory framework within the Republic of the Union of Myanmar and to demonstrate its commitment to its responsibilities as an active ASEAN member state. This National Food Safety Policy promotes a harmonised, integrated, risk-based approach to food safety regulation throughout the food chain, from farm to fork.

This National Food Safety Policy will be reviewed periodically and updated as required to reflect new developments which impact the safety of foods or its regulation within the Republic of the Union of Myanmar.

The vision for the National Food Safety Policy is to contribute to the protection of consumer health by ensuring that all foods produced in or imported into the country, for placing on the market, are safe for human consumption. In achieving this vision, it is envisaged that the Union government and relevant government bodies actively participate in the harmonization of food safety control measures to facilitate trade within regional ASEAN member states and internationally.



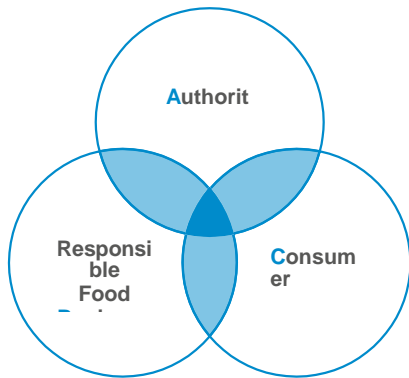
### 2.1. Scope of Policy

This policy adopts an overarching farm to fork approach to food safety covering all stages along the food chain from source to consumption.

### 2.2. Policy Implementation

A number of government bodies of the Union Government fall within the scope of this policy and are responsible for its implementation. Implementation will be achieved through a coordinated and collaborative approach between relevant government bodies. The Myanmar Food Authority will be responsible for leading a coordinated and collaborative approach towards policy implementation. A policy implementation plan outlining the actions to be taken to achieve the policy objectives will be developed by the Myanmar Food Authority in conjunction with other relevant government bodies.

This policy has a number of stakeholders which can be broadly divided into three main categories:



- **A: Authority** – the government bodies with responsibility for enforcement of food safety legislation are key stakeholders and are key to the implementation of this policy<sup>1</sup>.
- **B: Food Business** – all sectors within the food industry are key stakeholders and have responsibility to ensure that the foods produced are safe for human consumption. Engagement of food business with government bodies on areas such as food safety issues, legislation development and decision making is important to enhance the effectiveness of the food safety control system.
- **C: Consumer** – consumers are considered stakeholders of this policy. Governments have the responsibility of protecting the health of these consumers. Consumers have a role in engaging with government bodies, either directly or through associations, to enhance their awareness of food safety matters and empower them to make informed decisions regarding the foods they consume and hygienic practices. Consumers are encouraged to express their views on future policies and legislation through participation in government consultations.

The level of engagement of each of these stakeholders can be broadly divided into three main categories: involved; influential and interested.

**Involved stakeholders** include:

- Myanmar Food Authority
- Ministry of Health and Sports (Food and Drug Administration, Department of Public Health)
- Mayor of Yangon City
- Mayor of Mandalay City
- Mayor of Nay Pyi Taw City
- Minister of Municipal Affairs from State and Regional Government
- Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation (Department of Fisheries; Department of Agriculture (Plant Protection Division); Livestock, Breeding and Veterinary Department (Veterinary Division; Apiculture Development Division)
- Ministry of Commerce (Department of Trade)
- Ministry of Education (Department of Research and Innovation)
- Ministry of Home Affairs (Myanmar Police Force; General Administrative Department)
- Ministry of Planning, Finance and Industry (Small-scale Industries Department)
- Food Business Operators

**Influential stakeholders** include: ASEAN; Chief Ministers of States and Regions; Ministry of Planning, Finance and Industry; Ministry of Planning, Finance and Industry (Myanmar Custom Department); Union Attorney General's Office; City Planning and Land Administration Department, CDC; Ministry of Commerce (Department of Consumer Affairs); Ministry of Border Affairs; Ministry of Information; Agriculture and Food Industry Federations and Associations; Consumer Associations.

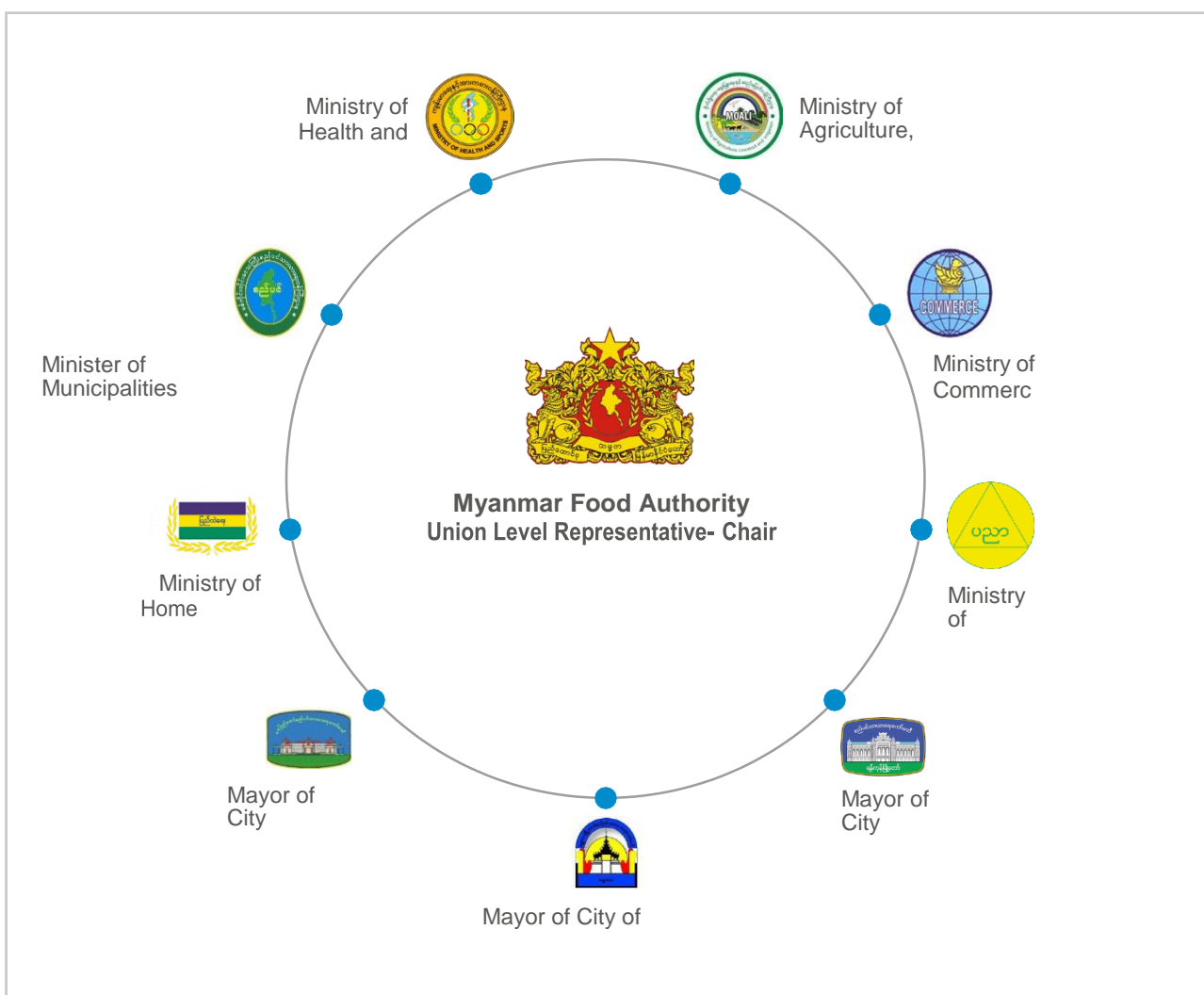
**Interested stakeholders** include: consumers; general public; trading partners; media and international organizations. The level of engagement of stakeholders in the policy development and policy implementation varies and depends on the stakeholder categories.

<sup>1</sup> Government offices naming was sourced from: The Republic of the Union of Myanmar, Presidents Office website, <http://www.president-office.gov.mm/en/?q=cabinet/id-6208>



Responsibility for the implementation of this food safety policy and the enforcement of food safety legislation within the Republic of the Union of Myanmar falls under a number of government bodies. Those government bodies identified to date are listed in Figure 1. However this list of government bodies may change as supervisory arrangements across the food chain are reviewed by the Myanmar Food Authority.

The Myanmar Food Authority<sup>2</sup> chaired by a Union level representative, provides a mechanism for oversight of food safety enforcement activities and facilitates the cooperation and collaboration of official food safety controls across these government bodies. The Myanmar Food Authority will set the national strategic food safety objectives and set a national food safety control plan. The organizational structure of the Myanmar Food Authority and its Union Government members are outlined in the schematic in Figure 1. The supervisory arrangements of each government body with responsibility for food safety enforcement will be documented by the Myanmar Food Authority. This document will be updated as required and maintained separate to this policy document.

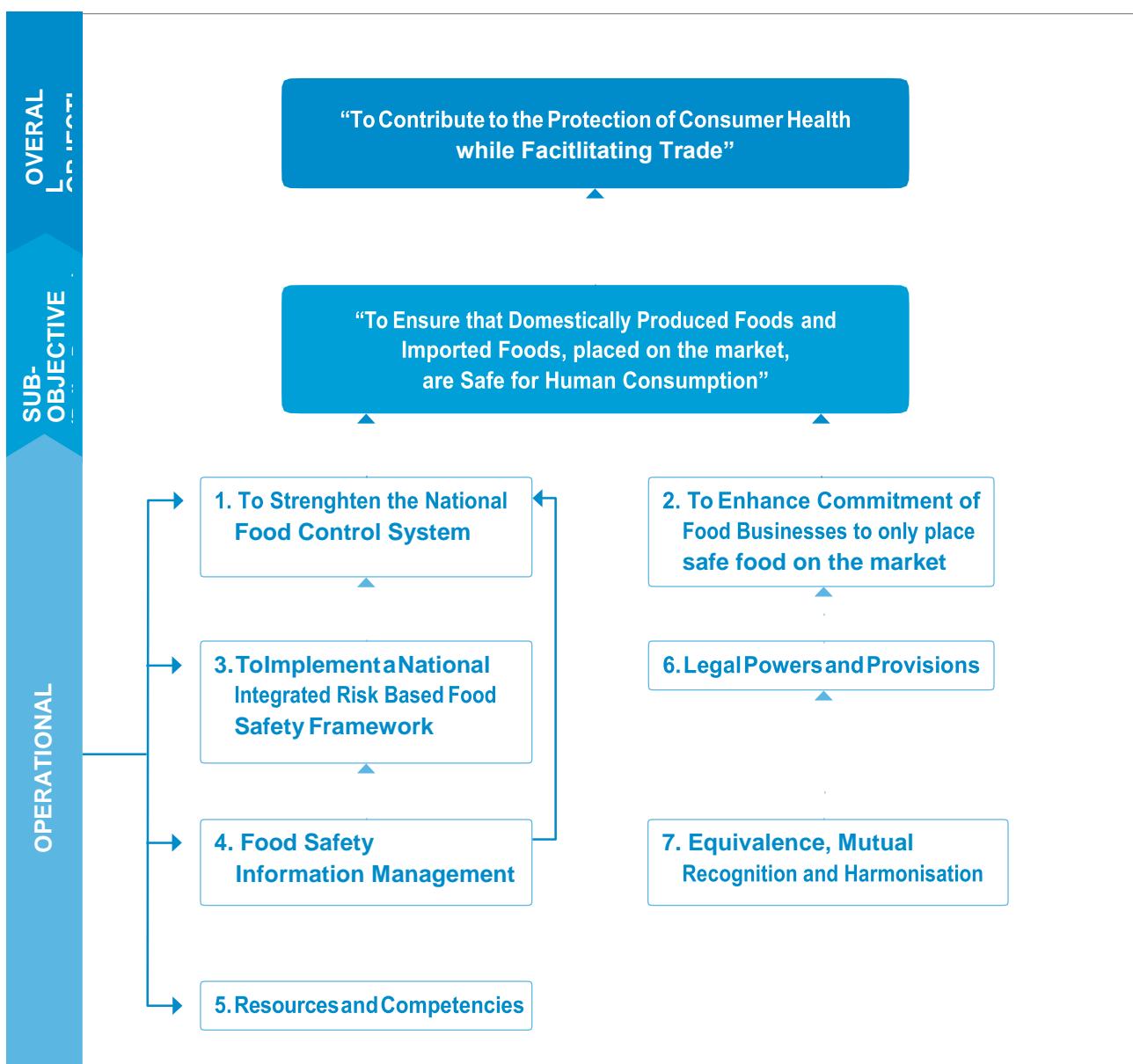


**Figure 1: Organizational structure of the ‘Myanmar Food Authority’ for the oversight of food safety enforcement in the Republic of the Union of Myanmar and Union Government members.**

<sup>2</sup> Myanmar Food Authority established under the National Food and Drug Law, 1992 (as amended).

This policy identifies one *‘overall objective’* which is to contribute to the **‘protection of consumer health while facilitating trade’**. There are many factors which influence the protection of consumer health, some of which fall within the scope of this policy (e.g. provision of safe food) and other factors outside the policy remit (e.g. provision of health care, environmental conditions). To link the influencing factors within this policy remit with the overall policy objective, one specific *‘sub-objective’* was identified. This sub-objective aims to ensure that ‘domestically produced foods and imported foods placed on the market are safe for human consumption’.

The realization of both the sub-objective and overall objective outlined above can be achieved through policy implementation of a specific set of actions. The policy outlines this set of actions as seven *‘operational goals’*, most of which are interlinked (Figure 2). The scope of this policy falls within the remit of a number of government bodies, therefore for successful implementation of the policy goals, it is essential that an integrated approach between relevant government bodies is applied. The overall objective, sub-objective and operational goals are outlined in Figure 2.



**Figure 2:** Hierarchical display of the National Food Safety Policy Objective, Sub-Objective and Operational goals.

## 5.1. Overall Objective: To Contribute to the Protection of Consumer Health while facilitating trade

A high level of protection of consumer health should be assured to consumers in the Republic of the Union of Myanmar. Food safety policies, law and measures must be aimed at **protecting consumers health** and providing a basis for consumers to make informed choices.

Governments face increased challenges in protecting and promoting the interests of consumers due to increased cross-border trade, use of e-Commerce and other new trading methods resulting from globalisation and technological advancement. This goal also aims to **stimulate fair trading practices, preventing fraud and adulteration of food and any other practices that can be misleading or harmful to the consumer.**

All aspects of a national food control system should be operated in an effective, efficient and coherent manner, free from any commercial, financial, hierarchical, political or other pressures which could potentially affect the protection of consumers. In the event of a conflict with other interests, precedence should be given to protecting the health and safety of consumers.

## 5.2. Sub Objective: To ensure that domestically produced foods and imported foods, placed on the market, are safe for human consumption

Within the scope of food safety enforcement, union government can protect consumer health by ensuring that all foods produced in or imported into the Republic of the Union of Myanmar and placed on the market are safe for human consumption.

### 5.2.1 Operational Goal No 1: To strengthen the National Food Control System

Modern food production and processing involves a complex interaction of elements and factors which can potentially affect the safety of food. The management of these risks can be achieved by systematically concentrating on reducing the risks of contamination at every point of the food supply chain. This policy adopts the principle of the 'farm to fork food chain' approach. This principle aims at ensuring that a coherent and integrated approach is applied within the national food control system and that official controls covers every point of the food supply chain, from production and processing to storage, distribution and retail, including the production and use of feed which is intended for food producing animals.

Strengthening the national food control system is a shared responsibility involving different types of stakeholders, including government bodies, the food industry and consumers. Key elements required to strengthen the national food controls system include:

- **An effective integrated approach:** This can be achieved through open and transparent cooperation and collaboration between relevant food safety enforcement bodies at key stages of the food safety enforcement activities, in particular in the drafting of policies and legislation, the planning, implementation and reporting stages. An integrated approach will help ensure that duplication of work between government bodies is reduced and lead to more efficient use of human and financial resources. In addition, all key stakeholders within a national food control system should have specific roles and responsibilities clearly defined.
- In terms of **food safety enforcement**, the strengthening of monitoring and surveillance programme along the food chain, through an integrated risk based approach is a key contributor in protecting consumer health.
- **Enforcement consistency:** Consistency in the enforcement of food safety laws at all administrative levels is essential to ensure that the health of consumers across the nation is adequately protected and that food businesses are regulated fairly and consistently.



- **Monitoring and reporting on performance:** The national food control system should possess the capacity and capability to monitor and report on its performance in achieving its objective and undergo continuous improvements where necessary.

#### 5.2.2 Operational Goal No.2:

To enhance commitment of food businesses to only place safe food on the market

Food Businesses within the Republic of the Union of Myanmar have the primary responsibility for ensuring the safety of the food they place on the market. Enhancing the food safety culture and commitment of food businesses is beneficial for the regulator, the consumer and the business itself. Demonstrating commitment to placing safe food on the domestic and international market can lead to increased consumer confidence, increased trust from government bodies with the creation of a favourable environment for food safety enforcement activities, recognition as industry leader and increased market opportunities. Government interventions for enhancing food safety commitment can include simple mechanisms such as open, transparent and ongoing engagement and information sharing with industry on regulatory matters and more resource intensive mechanisms such as support and assistance for small and medium-size enterprises (SMEs) to assist them achieving compliance with national food safety requirements.

#### 5.2.3 Operational Goal No.3:

To Implement a National Integrated Risk Based Food Safety Framework

The increasing globalization of the food trade, urbanization, changing consumption patterns, the intensification of agriculture, increasing travel and tourism and new types of production and manufacturing systems are just some of the trends that are having a serious impact on food safety in many countries. Activities within the National Food Safety Control System should be based on the principles of risk, taking account of scientific evidence and information, as appropriate. All risk-based control enforcement measures should be undertaken in an independent, objective and transparent manner.

#### 5.2.4 Operational Goal No.4:

Food Safety Information Management

The availability of reliable and up to date information is essential to strengthen the National Food Control System in the Republic of the Union of Myanmar. The development of intelligent electronic information management systems at all administrative levels within the country will be the cornerstone to implementing the mentioned 'risk-based approach'



to food safety enforcement. Such information systems can assist in understanding of the food safety environment in operation (e.g. food business activities, food safety inspection and sampling data, monitoring of food borne illnesses) to inform decision making and to communicate with consumers.

The sharing of relevant data and information between government bodies is key for the effective operation of the National Food Control System.

#### **5.2.5 Operational Goal No.5:** Resources and Competencies

The capacity of a national food control system relates to its ability to perform appropriate functions effectively, efficiently and sustainably to achieve its objectives. A national food control system should have sufficient and suitable resources to enable it to meet the system's objectives in a sustainable manner. Building the human resource capacities will contribute to ensuring officials are knowledgeable in their fields and understand their regulatory role and responsibilities. All food safety officials must be trained commensurate with their specific role within food safety enforcement. Competent officials at all administrative levels contributes to enhanced trust in the regulator through consistency in enforcement of food safety law. In particular:

- A network of competent food safety inspectors within the Republic of the Union of Myanmar is essential for effective risk based food safety enforcement.
- A network of food safety laboratories within the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, capably of operating consistent with international standards, is essential to support official inspection and enforcement activities.

#### **5.2.6 Operational Goal No.6:** Legal Powers and Provisions

Appropriate and effective legal powers and provisions are key for effective enforcement of food law at all stages of the food chain. These legal powers must be clear and unambiguous and must specify the roles and responsibilities of all relevant government bodies with responsibility for enforcement of food safety law.

Food safety enforcement officers must be competent in the use of legal powers authorised to them to ensure they are used in an effective and proportionate manner.

### 5.2.7 Operational Goal No.7: Equivalence, Mutual Recognition and Harmonisation

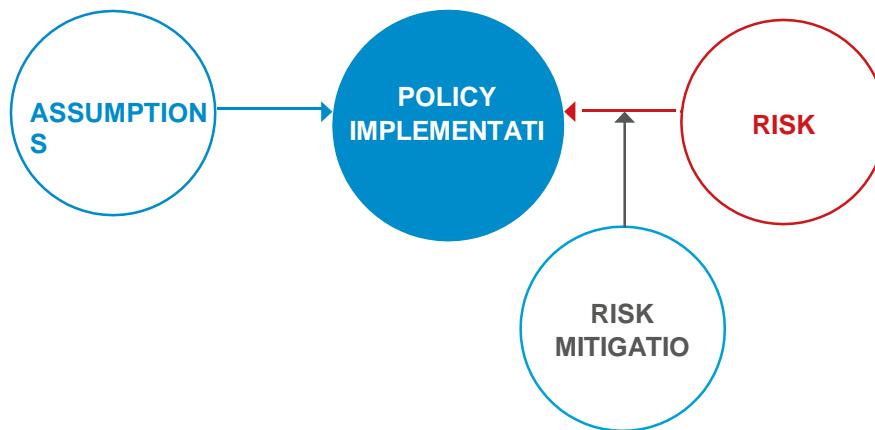


WORLD TRADE  
ORGANIZATION

The principle of mutual recognition will be applied by food safety regulators in the Republic of the Union of Myanmar. National food control systems or their components, although designed and structured differently, capable of meeting the same food safety objectives will be considered 'equivalent' at entry points into the Republic of the Union of Myanmar. In particular, the Republic of the Union of Myanmar will facilitate economic integration within ASEAN by establishing mutual recognition arrangements (MRAs) and equivalence arrangements with suitable member states.

National food safety legislation within the Republic of the Union of Myanmar should be comprehensive, up-to-date, covering all stages of the food chain and consistent with international obligations laid down in international agreements, such as those developed by the World Trade Organisation's Agreements on Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) Measures and on Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT), Codex Alimentarius, the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) and the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) and with the ASEAN Trade in Goods Agreement (ATIGA). Consideration should also be given to international standards, recommendations and guidelines, whenever appropriate, as elements of the national food control system to protect the health of consumers and ensure fair practices in the food trade. As a committed member state of ASEAN, the Republic of the Union of Myanmar will participate in initiatives to develop and maintain food safety standards and technical regulations which have been harmonised with international standards and requirements.

Consumer confidence and the confidence of trading partners is secured through appropriate openness and transparency regarding food safety matters. The National Food Control System in the Republic of the Union of Myanmar should make every effort to operate in an open and transparent manner sufficient to fulfil relevant WHO SPS requirements.



There are a number of assumptions and risks associated with the application of the concepts of this policy and the implementation of the policy objectives.

The **assumptions** include:

- Political support
- Collaboration and coordination within the Republic of the Union of Myanmar to achieve an integrated approach
- Adequate resources, capacities and capabilities

The **risks** include:

- Weak ownership and support by key stakeholders
- Resistance to change by stakeholders
- Weak collaboration and coordination between all government bodies involved in policy implementation
- Poor communication and clarification on proposed changes and desired outcomes
- Ineffective change management
- Ineffective implementation

The following approaches could be used to **mitigate** the risks mentioned above:

- Commitment from senior Union Government officials to policy implementation
- Clarification on roles and responsibilities of key stakeholders
- Ongoing forums for communication and collaboration between key stakeholders at all administrative levels
- Comprehensive implementation plan with adequate resource capabilities
- Monitoring and Evaluation

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