

Challenges and opportunities for regulatory cooperation and coherence across Asia Pacific

Carl Ramage^{1*}

¹*Rautaki Solutions Pty Ltd, Melbourne, VIC, Australia;*

*e-mail: carl@rautakisolutions.com.au

Abstract

The regulation of food products from biotechnology varies widely across the Asia-Pacific region, largely based on local economic, political, and societal motives. However, all relevant regulatory agencies, regardless of geography, share the same mandate—to ensure the health and safety of consumers and the environment.

Numerous workshops and studies have been undertaken across the Asia Pacific region exploring the challenges and opportunities for regulatory cooperation. Consistently it has been recognized that robust regulatory practices (coherence) are an important factor in determining the possibility of embarking on regulatory cooperation efforts as well as the likelihood of success.

International guidelines and standards for food and environmental safety assessment of biotech products are foundational documents useful to support cooperation. However, it is clear there are numerous inconsistencies in their function and use in the decision-making process. There remains a large appetite for capacity building in safety assessment within many economies across the region.

Additional challenges that create significant barriers and hurdles to cooperation include the need for political will and support for cooperation activities; greater alignment between different internal ministries/departments (e.g., agriculture and environment) and addressing the negative voice of public interest groups.

These challenges and opportunities for regulatory cooperation and coherence across the Asia Pacific region will be discussed.

Key words: Cooperation, Regulatory Coherence, Asia Pacific