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Developing Country Requirements for the Improvement of Food Quality and Safety

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Abstract

The importance of food quality and safety for developing countries is not only due to its implications for domestic public health, but also due to the need to meet the continuing challenge of international market access and competitiveness. Key areas of particular concern to developing countries are the improvement of food safety and quality for:

- **locally produced agricultural goods**, an area which is of growing importance because of changing food consumption patterns as well as the ever more complex and long distance agricultural-food supply and distribution systems, both related to increased urbanization in many developing countries.
- **imported products**. Triggered by the liberalization of international agricultural trade and WTO negotiations on reduction of tariffs, developing country markets might become the dump for poor quality agricultural products. Unless they have internationally recognized quality control mechanisms in place, they have no means of protecting consumers from food born hazards or inferior products.
- **export products** in order to comply with import country standards both official and private. Rejection rates for products originating from developing countries are unproportionally high, which has vital economic implications for many developing countries, where the share of agricultural products can make up 70–90% of the total exports.

In order for developing countries to cope with with these new challenges, they need to participate more actively in the international standard setting bodies, adapt their regulatory framework and norms to the international standard, increase the effectiveness of government quality control systems, enhance communication and co-ordination between the different actors in the supply chain, introduce in house food quality systems at primary production and food industry level, and increase awareness of civil society on food quality and safety issues.

GTZ experiences in supporting developing countries in fulfilling these requirements will be discussed.