



Proposed Food Regulatory Roadmap

November 2021

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1. Background

The National Assembly of the Republic of Suriname endorsed the creation of a National Food Safety Agency (NIVS), hereafter referred to as NIVS, on December 18th 2021, as the sole food regulatory body.

NIVS gathers all food regulatory authorities on food safety and quality, with a mandate that aligns with the mandate of the Codex Alimentarius Commission, the international food standard setting body, and regardless of the state of processing of the food commodity.

NIVS will be collaborating with other Surinamese regulators hosted by the Ministry of Agriculture (LVV), mainly the animal health regulator, led by the Chief Veterinary Officer (CVO) and the Plant Health regulator, headed by the National Plant Protection Office (NPPO).

NIVS will aim to offer a favorable and enabling environment that supports confidence in the safety and quality of Surinamese food and agri-food products and that contributes therefore towards enhanced market access opportunities domestically and internationally.

As part of its commitment to apply best food regulatory practices, NIVS will adopt a roadmap of its food regulatory development initiatives. This plan takes stock of the current food regulatory environment and the urgent needs expressed by the food production sector to modernize the Surinamese food regulatory landscape.

The roadmap will also offer the opportunity for NIVS to adopt principles of food regulatory management that will guide the development and implementation of food regulatory functions over time.

2. Proposed Core Values of NIVS's Food Regulatory Measures

In developing and issuing its food regulatory measures, NIVS will strive to follow best food regulatory practices, including the adoption of the following core values:

- **Predictability:** NIVS will ensure that its food safety regulatory decisions abide by the risk analysis principles advocated by the Codex Alimentarius Commission (Codex) and anchored in evidence, including scientific assessments, documented option analysis and alignment with Codex Standards for risk management decisions.

This approach will prevent the issuance of arbitrary food regulatory decisions to support predictability for all stakeholders.

The development and adoption of a multi-year food regulatory roadmap is another practice that will help achieve such predictability and continued relevance of NIVS food regulatory programs in addressing emerging food safety, nutrition and quality issues impacting the Surinamese food supply.

- **Engagement and Partnerships:** Considering the shared responsibilities of all aspects related to food safety, quality and nutrition, success is achieved when all partners in a food safety system – producers across the supply chain, service providers, consumers, and regulators – fulfill their responsibilities and are accountable for their actions, with minimal reliance on deterring measures.

Following this guidance, NIVS commits to continued engagement and involvement of its stakeholders, in particular, its regulated parties at every stage of all food regulatory development activities.

The development of food safety solutions through partnerships between NIVS and its regulated parties will be an ongoing practice supportive of a modernized food regulatory framework underpinned by co-regulatory measures developed and adopted by Food Business Operators (FBOs) and validated by NIVS.

This will also take stock of recent guidance issued by Codex and in particular that related to the reliance of voluntary Third Party Assessment (vTPA) Schemes¹ as part of ascertaining the development and maintenance of food safety and quality systems, enshrined in preventive measures to be developed and applied by FBOs.

- **Transparency:** NIVS will enshrine this value when engaged in food regulatory development and implementation practices. Transparency is a cornerstone to the attainment and issuance of food regulatory decisions.

Espousing this value is another driver for the development and adoption of a multi-year food regulatory roadmap by NIVS as a routine practice to identify and act on the Institute's food regulatory priorities.

3. Objectives and Scope of this Document

This document presents a proposed multi-year roadmap of food regulatory initiatives to be developed by NIVS, including the underpinning legislative reform that the organization should carry-out and the identification of food regulatory priorities, the development of food regulatory measures and their operationalization.

This document will serve as an initial trigger to engage in consultations with NIVS stakeholders to identify and prioritize the agency's food regulatory initiatives.

The scope of this roadmap:

- Includes measures adopted by NIVS as interim measures, using the regulatory instrument, based on the prerogatives and regulatory powers granted to NIVS through the NIVS Act
- Includes all aspects of food regulatory development from the identification of issues to the operationalization of decisions made by NIVS's leadership through the Institute's governance structure using the regulatory instrument.
- Includes initial efforts of legislative transformation to be led by NIVS in collaboration with stakeholders.
- Excludes food regulatory measures issued by NIVS in the context of a specific food incident management.
- Excludes voluntary measures such as educational and dissemination programs.

The period covered by the roadmap extends from **2022 to 2024**.

¹ Principles and guidelines for the assessment and use of voluntary Third Party Assurance (vTPA) programmes, Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC), adopted by CAC44, as indicated in <https://www.who.int/news-room/events/detail/2021/11/08/default-calendar/codex-alimentarius-commission-8--13-15-17-and-18-november-2021>

4. Methodology

In developing the projected roadmap for 2022-24 NIVS followed best practices applied by reputable food regulators in North America, Europe and the Southwest Pacific. Initial priorities were identified through an initial engagement by NIVS senior leadership and will need to be complemented by:

- Discussions of NIVS Board of Trustees
- Facilitated discussions involving NIVS' food regulatory workforce as this workforce joins the organization
- Facilitated discussions with NIVS stakeholders to be organized during the last trimester of 2021.

Food regulatory functions included in the scope of this roadmap may be mapped out under three categories, as represented in Figure 1. It is also important to note that the road should encompass the opportunity to reshape Suriname's Food Safety legislation, where NIVS would take the lead to prepare for an updated policy underpinning the food legislative reform. This policy would then be ready to support any drafting of an updated legislation should there be a window of opportunity to proceed as per the legislative agenda of the Government of Suriname.

5. Policy Underpinning Food Legislative Reform

NIVS commits to convene a task team to review previous efforts that led to propose an alternative to the 1911 food law, currently in force.

The projected legislation should enable NIVS to apply a preventive approach, favoring interventions as early in the food production chain as possibly be, and to enshrine food risk analysis as the foundation for food safety regulatory decision-making. The law should also emphasize the responsibility of Food Business Operators on identifying and addressing food safety hazards and to further clarify the prerogatives of NIVS in setting food safety requirements and overseeing their adoption by FBOs. It should also encompass updated penalties in line with the current environment and the nature of the infraction, including deliberate acts of fraud and tampering.

NIVS will also commit to lead a national consultation process enabling to gather the feed-back on the proposed policy and its ready translation into legal drafting instructions.

While the legislative reform is still under examination, NIVS commits to proceed with the development of food regulatory provisions that allows it to exercise its food safety mandate, using the authorities conferred by the NIVS law and the relevant regulation-making authorities. The subsequent paragraphs will outline such efforts in more details.

The new food regulatory provisions developed by NIVS in this interim period would be considered for possible consolidation under the new food law, once the law developed and adopted and if the relevant regulation making authorities allow such consolidation.

6. Horizontal Food Regulatory Functions

These functions include:

6.1.1. Rulemaking

Encompasses the development of regulatory requirements applicable to all food production sectors:

- **Standard Setting functions:** these horizontal standards relate to setting conditions of use for substances used in conjunction with food production – management of additives, residues of

pesticides and veterinary drugs, food contact chemicals – which are generally managed using pre-market approval schemes.

Horizontal standards also relate to the management of contaminants – chemical and microbial – as well as labeling provisions: both health-driven and provisions associated with the need to offer accurate information to consumers on food composition and conditions of production.

- **Management of Food Production Establishments:** through setting requirements of sanitary conditions of food production, based upon pre-requisite programs, preventive controls, and traceability. These elements constitute the pillars of food safety management systems to be adopted by food business operators (FBOs) and are generally associated with licensing of food operations adopted by food regulators – i.e., registration and licensing regimes across the food production chain (primary production, processed foods and retail) – to identify “who” does “what” in the food production landscape and to support the early identification of issues of non-compliance. It is expected that NIVS would apply the same registration requirements to primary production operations, as a result of agreements to be developed with the Ministry of Agriculture (LVV), and with VKI, aiming for a single food business operators licensing regime in Suriname.

6.2. Rule Execution

Involves the ability to implement the food regulatory provisions developed above – an equally important function – which includes the development of:

- **Compliance Verification and Inspection Programs:** targeting both domestically produced products, imports as well as products destined to export markets.
- **Incident Management and Enforcement Functions:** including management of instances of non-compliance, enforcement measures associated with food safety incidents such as food recalls and the management of foodborne illness outbreaks.

7. Vertical Food Regulatory Functions

While the development of these horizontal functions should be incrementally addressed, it may be operationally more feasible to develop food regulatory enhancements in a manner that is specific to priority production sectors and in a stepwise fashion. This leads to the adoption of a set of sector-specific food regulatory functions – vertical food regulatory functions – to address the need of providing guidance for the enhancement of food safety and quality management practices and requirements, including the enforcement of such requirements on an increasing number of food production sectors gradually.

For specific food production sectors – for example, fresh fruit and vegetables, post-harvest fisheries, minimally processed fruit and vegetables, etc. – or sub-sectors – for example, fruit and vegetable packing facilities, fish drying or smoking facilities canning operations, etc. – the horizontal requirements must be adapted to offer clear guidance that is explicit in terms of how certain (horizontal) provisions are to be applied for a given sector. For example, allowable additives to be used in a given processing sector should be listed, along with their conditions of use, pre-requisite programs and preventive controls adapted to a given set of operations while remaining consistent with horizontal requirements. The registration or licensing regime for these operators are therefore made clearer, along with the associated compliance verification, inspection and enforcement functions

8. Food Regulatory Enablers

The implementation of these regulatory functions, in a manner that is consistent with Codex guidance and international best practices, requires the fulfillment of specific enablers; namely, food testing capacity which must be made available to support data collection, indispensable for activities such as standard setting, compliance verification and enforcement.

Relying upon a clear set of policies to develop food regulatory decisions, either operational – for example, enforcement action, such as a product recall, or rescinding an establishment license – or of a longer-term nature – for example, regulatory provision, implementation policies – in a manner that is consistent with international best practice, requires the adoption of the risk analysis principles as the foundation of the decision-making process.

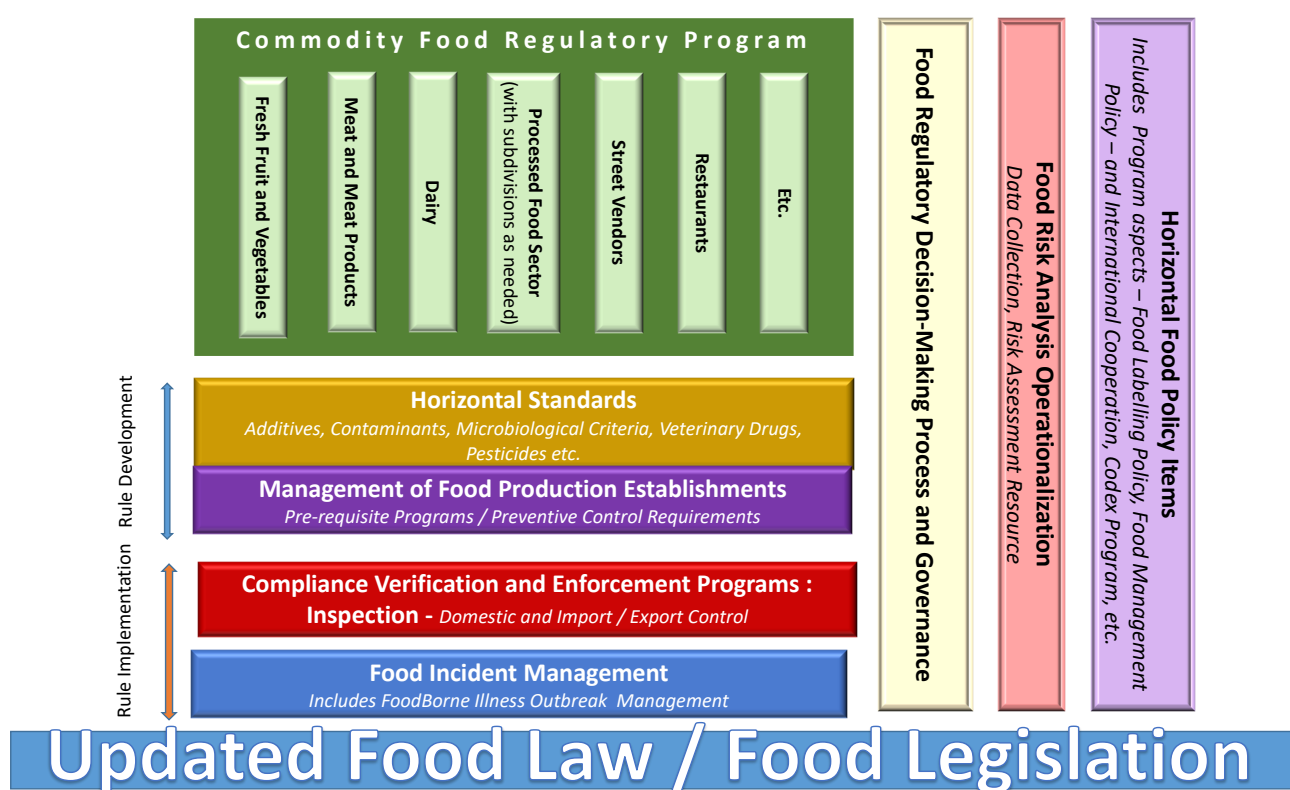


Figure 1: Proposed Structure of Food Regulatory Program Design to be Applied by NIVS

9. Proposed Food Regulatory Roadmap 2022-2024

NIVS will develop and continuously review its progress in enacting food regulatory provisions enabling it to exercise its food safety oversight in a manner that is predictable and transparent.



The objective is to equip NIVS, as the sole food regulator, with a modernized toolbox of regulatory measures aligned with Codex provisions as well as with those promulgated by other trading partners.

Table 1 presents a proposed timetable for such food regulatory measures development and deployment by NIVS as the agency continues to build its food regulatory capacity.

Table 1: Proposed Timetable for the development and implementation of horizontal food regulatory functions

	Subject	Dates of Implementation	
		Rule Development	Rule Deployment
Management of Food Production Establishments	Food operations licensing regime starting with the fruit and vegetable sector	Jan2022	Jan 2022-Dec 2023
	Conditions of Production: Pre-requisite Programs, Preventive Controls, Traceability	June 2022 – Dec 2023	Jan 2023 – Dec 2024
	Food Import Control	April 2022	Jan 2023-Dec 2024
	Food Export Control	April 2022	Sept 2022-Dec 2024
Horizontal Standards	Pesticide MRLs	Jan2022-Dec2023	TBC
	Veterinary Drug MRLs	TBC	Partial
	Food Additives	April 2022-Dec 2023	TBC
	Incidental Additives	TBC	TBC
	Processing Aids	TBC	TBC
	Food Contact Materials	TBC	TBC
	Official Analytical Methods	April 2022-TBC	TBC
	Chemical Contaminants	April 2022-Sept 2022	TBC
	Microbial Criteria	Sept2022-Dec2022	TBC
	Health Claims	TBC	TBC
	Food for Special Dietary Uses / Special Food	TBC	TBC
	Novel Food	TBC	TBC
	Labelling Requirements - Fraud Management: methods of production related claims e.g., organic	TBC	TBC
	Labelling Requirements: Nutrition Labelling	TBC	TBC
	Labelling Requirements: Health Driven measures – e.g., Food Allergens	TBC	TBC
Labelling Requirements: Date Marking	TBC	TBC	

TBC: date of development and implementation will need to be confirmed in consultation with stakeholders.

-  Areas may be covered by several regulations as warranted by the realities of the sector. Post market decisions: rules of general application for food to access and remain on market.
-  Partial Premarket oversight

 Premarket decisions – i.e. decisions of approval before access to market

9.1. *Regulatory Provisions Related to the Management of Food Production Establishments*

NIVS will enact a foundational regulation related to its food oversight on food business operators and production establishments, such that it can identify operators and condition their operations with food safety management requirements that are aimed to be incremental and adapted to the sector's operations.

9.1.1. *Rules / Decisions related to Pre-Requisite Programs, Preventive Controls and Traceability*

NIVS will develop a framework that conditions licensing of establishments and their operations with the adoption of a food safety management plan as illustrated in Figure 2.

These requirements will be adapted to the realities of the sector: size of operations, type of operations, level of readiness. They will be developed and deployed, in an incremental fashion, in a manner that accompanies the upgrade of food safety performance of a given (targeted) sector.

An initial implementation of this rule will target the fruit and vegetable production sector, primary production, minimal processing and beyond, in a manner that supports the sector to adopt a Good Agriculture Practice approach as an example of a food safety management plan.

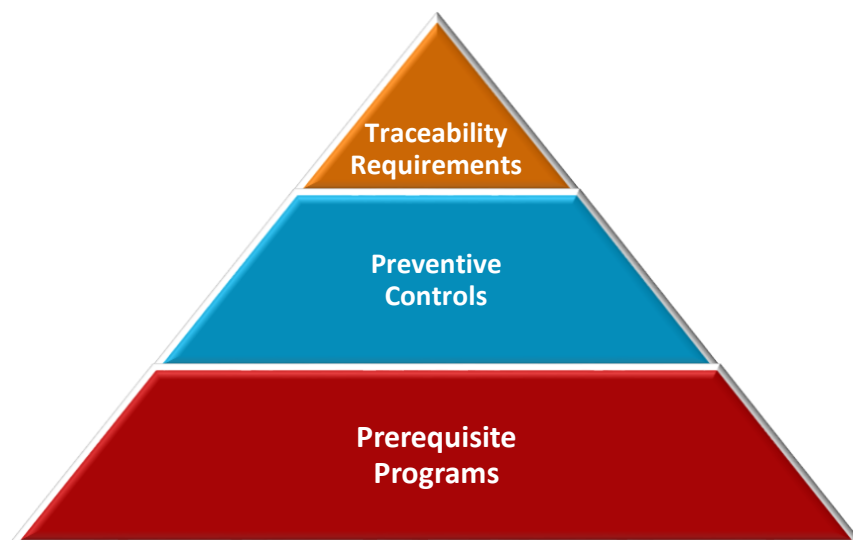


Figure 2: Example of food safety management plan

9.2. *Foundational Food regulatory Approaches*

As part of the 2022 – 2024 Roadmap, NIVS is also planning to equip its food regulatory program with foundational guidance documents that will further support the Agency's consistent exercise of its food regulatory mandate.

In particular, NIVS intends to develop and adopt:

- **A general food regulatory compliance and enforcement policy** which will set the general principles for NIV's compliance verification and enforcement activities.
- **A general food incident management guidance document** which will clearly define the Roles and Responsibilities of NIVS staff and regulated parties, including procedural steps, related to the

management of food safety incidents identified as a deviation from normal or expected food safety parameters during any step of the food production value chain.

The latter guidance documents will be operationalized with an initial reliance on table-top exercises.

These foundational documents, once adopted by NIVS, will be subject to continuous review and update. They will also contribute to enabling a consistent food regulatory decision-making process by NIVS, one that is less reliant on personal or subjective considerations and that is more codified.

10. Conclusion

NIVS will initiate its transformation of the Surinamese food regulatory landscape with the adoption of a food regulatory development roadmap, that not only includes paving the way for food safety legislative renewal, but also to equip the Agency with the regulatory arsenal it requires to oversee food production, including import/export operations.

NIVS remains committed to establishing the foundation of a predictable and enabling food regulatory environment that ensures optimal protection for Surinamese consumers and offers a favorable environment for the development of food and agri-food industries.

This roadmap will be subjected to regular review and update, to account for the levers of change that may surround the food production sector and to benefit from the input and feedback of NIVS' domestic and international stakeholders.