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A REPORT FOR THE CALIFORNIA CHERRY BOARD

SPECIFIC ISSUES OF INTEREST TO THE CCB:

Australia Publishes Consultation on Draft Fruit Fly Sterile Insect Technique Policy

- Australia's Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment (DAWE) is accepting [comments](#) on a [draft policy](#) regarding use of Sterile Insect Technique (SIT) in areas already declared fruit fly free.
- The policy provides the Australian national position on the use of SIT flies domestically to ensure that international expectations are met where trade certification is required.
- Additionally, DAWE will use principles of this policy for assessing trade partners' systems and to evaluate import conditions of foreign countries with SIT programs.
- Part 2 of the policy finds that SIT insects are not to be released in production areas claimed to be free of the targeted pest. Additionally, a period of time after cessation of a SIT release program and reinstatement of a suspended Pest Free Area must be agreed upon by all states, territories, and the Australian government to ensure confidence in the pest freedom claim.
- Part 3 establishes scenarios in which SIT is accepted.
- Comments are due by March 28, 2021 using the provided [online survey](#).

GENERAL ISSUES OF INTEREST TO THE CCB:

Chile Establishes an Official Safety Control System for Fresh and Frozen Exported Fruit

- Chile [notified the WTO](#) (in Spanish) of a [draft resolution](#) (in Spanish) establishing the Official Safety Control System in the agri-food chain of fresh and frozen fruit products for export.
- According to the notification, the requirements include performing hazard analysis and a prerequisite program based on those hazards, maintaining a supplier control system, and validating the protocols established in Good Agricultural Practices (GAP), Good Manufacturing Practice (GMP), and Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP) systems in order to comply with certification.
- Comments are due by April 13, 2021.

The United Kingdom Applies for CPTPP Membership

- The United Kingdom [has requested to join](#) the Comprehensive and Progressive Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP). Formal negotiations will start later this year.
- The CPTPP is a free trade agreement including Australia, Brunei, Canada, Chile, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore, and Vietnam which was established after the U.S. withdrew from the Trans-Pacific Partnership.

Chile Notifies WTO of Strategy to Combat Plastic and Marine Waste

- Chile [notified the WTO](#) (in Spanish) of its [National Strategy on Marine Waste and Microplastics](#) (in Spanish).
- Included in the strategy are plans around food packaging and plastic bags. Section 2.2 highlights Chile's planned efforts to prevent the generation of plastic waste including:
 - 2.2.a. Continuing to promote [Law No. 21.100](#) banning disposable plastic bags
 - 2.2.b. Finalizing and pass a [law](#) limiting the generation of disposable products and single-use plastics by 2022
 - 2.2.c. Establishing a certification scheme for single-use plastics by 2023
 - 2.2.d. Publishing the [Supreme Decree on Containers and Packaging](#) (regarding recycling) in the Official Gazette in 2021
- The introduction of the plan has repeated references to the significance of food wrappers in marine plastic waste.
- Comments on the strategy are due by April 11, 2021.

Updates on COVID-19 and the Cold Chain

- The World Health Organization (WHO) held a [press conference](#) on February 9, 2021 at the end of its 4-week investigation in China regarding the origins of COVID-19.
- During the press conference, the WHO left open the possibility that the COVID-19 virus arrived in Wuhan through frozen products. Specifically, Dr. Peter Ben Embarek of WHO said, "We also have to do much more into understanding the possible role of cold-chain frozen products in the introduction of the virus over a distance. We know that the virus can persist and survive in conditions that are found in these cold and frozen environments, but we don't really understand if the virus can then transmit to humans and under which conditions this could happen."
- In a [subsequent interview with Science Magazine](#), Ben Embarek clarified that the presence of coronavirus on frozen foods is a reflection of the current worldwide presence of the virus, including in food manufacturing facilities across the world, and was not a likely route for the original entry into Wuhan.
- An official WHO report on the investigation is expected as early as next week.
- As outlined in a [USDA GAIN report](#), China continues to expand COVID-19 related requirements for frozen foods.
- Guangzhou and several other Chinese cities have recently introduced policies requiring imported frozen food products destined to enter the city for warehousing, processing, or consumption, to enter a centralized supervision warehouse for additional COVID-19 testing and disinfection. The city-level efforts duplicate COVID-19 testing and disinfection requirements at ports of entry.
- While the majority of China's measures have targeted imports of frozen cold chain foods, Chilean cherries saw sharp declines in sales earlier this month following a positive COVID-19 test on packaging and subsequent widespread rumors on social media.

Dr. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala Chosen as WTO Director-General

- Dr. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala of Nigeria [was chosen](#) as Director-General for the World Trade Organization.
- Dr. Okonjo-Iweala previously served as Nigeria's Foreign Minister and twice as its Finance Minister after a career as a development economist at the World Bank. She will be the first African and first woman Director General of the WTO.
- The WTO has been without a Director-General since Roberto Azevedo stepped down on August 31, 2020. Dr. Okonjo-Iweala's enters office on March 1, 2021. Her term will end on August 31, 2025 and is renewable.