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The scope of a given GAP scheme reflects its intended objectives, which can vary from ensuring food safety and quality of food produce and allowing traceability; or creating product differentiation (in order to capture new market niches by responding to consumer expected desires for sustainable agriculture); or minimizing the negative environmental externalities of agriculture; or creating new opportunities and more just conditions for small farmers in developing countries.

Further down the food chain, Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP) for processed goods including processed food, pharmaceuticals, clothing and nearly anything else we buy, have also been developed and are a routine part of business protocols and national and international government policy regulations, with assistance from WHO, WTO, International Labour Organization (ILO), UNIDO, and to a limited degree, FAO (Codex, International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC)). But to ensure manufactured products are safe and meet other standards, the agricultural products, which are used as raw materials, should logically also be produced in harmony with standards of GMP. This has given rise to the development of approaches 'from farm to table' that take the application of GAP as the starting point to ensuring food safety and quality in the food chain.

GAP processes for decision-making at the farm level have been increasingly recognized by governments and civil society, including the food and related industries, as the essential prerequisite to food safety from farm to fork. The GAP process embraces actions, technologies and systems that are accepted as most effective for optimal management of soil and water, and for crop and livestock production, from the point of view of microbiological and chemical safety, with the added dimensions of environmental, economic and social sustainability. The details of a GAP protocol for a commodity in a given production environment cannot be generalized and prescribe from a central information source like FAO, but must be adapted locally (taking into consideration local conditions and market requirements, if any) while based on general underlying principles or norms (see below).

The Sanitary and Phytosanitary regulatory instruments of FAO/WHO deal with limits of food contamination from agricultural practices, but do not provide location specific guidelines on how to ensure this on the farm. They also focus on food safety dimensions of the produce, less on environmental impacts or social conditions of production. Herein lies one of the compelling reasons for developing GAP processes that deal with these and other public concerns about agricultural production.

Codes developed to address product safety and quality² tend to focus on the impact of production practices on the end-product, less on the impact of production practices on the environment, fair employment or local development. Sustainability indicators and organic or fair trade standards developed by governments, public agencies or NGOs are likely to be more encompassing towards achieving SARD goals than standards developed by market actors. On the down side, they will often rely on public incentives or support such as government payments, extension and technical assistance - which makes them a costly option for developing countries. Or, they may also rely on price premiums based on consumers willingness to pay for environmental and social sustainability - which may limit their market share and therefore their potential as a tool to achieve SARD.

² "Quality" in this case meaning not adulterated in a manner to deceive the consumer or to substitute or dilute valuable components with less valuable ones.

3. Proposed Action Areas

3.1 AT GLOBAL LEVEL

3.1.1 Disseminate information on Good Agricultural Practices related concepts, approaches, methods and projects

We believe that the provision of better information related to GAP can contribute to better decision-making by governments, development agencies and NGOs and Non Governmental Organization (NGO) and Civil Society Organization (CSO) who seek to support farmers in farming more sustainably as well as interested private sector companies. At global level, this can be done through information tools, as well as analytical inventories and comparative studies on GAP schemes, their scope, drivers and the respective incentives to adopt them. This has been initiated through the compilation of a GAP meta-database (<http://www.fao.org/prods/gap/database/index.html>) of GAP guidelines, projects and field activities relating to work in FAO and elsewhere on agricultural technologies (TECA), FAO technical publication (EIMS) and projects, guidelines, national regulations and legislation related to GAP. The GAP web site (http://www.fao.org/prods/GAP/gapindex_en.htm) is also a support for information dissemination on GAP activities. Such tools can also be of help to those professional agricultural organizations who have the skills and resources to access this information. It is assumed that a different set of communication and information tools is needed to reach farmers and consumers. These specific tools (targeted training material, CD-Rom or publications, communication campaigns) may be developed as relevant in particular contexts.

3.1.2 Define global principles underlying Good Agricultural Practices, reflecting the three pillars of sustainability and food safety and quality considerations

It has been recommended by COAG last year that the principles presented in the annex to the GAP paper (see Annex 1) would need further refinement, drawing from FAO's large range of technical and institutional expertise. It is obviously a challenge to formalize global principles of GAP that are applicable worldwide, and some may question the relevance and usefulness of the attempt. However it is also clear that FAO has developed a substantial body of knowledge, principles and value judgments of what constitutes good practices for different components of agricultural production such as water management, soil and plant nutrition cycles, animal husbandry or integrated crop protection. Knowledge about these separate components could be usefully brought together and formalized in a comprehensive set of principles which would serve as a simple reference point on GAP, to be adapted, translated and prioritized into locally appropriate practices and indicators and to provide a baseline for technical assessment of existing GAP codes and standards. Recent FAO work on the application of holistic agro-ecological principles of farming are a step in the same direction, and the refinement of GAP principles should built on these efforts. The social dimension of sustainability and considerations of food safety and quality may need particular refinement in the GAP components. However, the social dimension of sustainability in particular are difficult to

(local or national food industry or buyer, farmers and their organizations, local government services for forestry, agriculture, livestock and the environment, extension services) with diverging objectives and views of the most appropriate land use and farming methods. A wealth of local knowledge is often available about what constitutes good practices in a given farming system from the point of view of research and extension, farmers or farmers organizations or market operators. But their implementation often fails because each stakeholders' definition fails to reflect the views and incentives of the others. Collaborative definition of applicable GAPs in a given context coupled with participatory extension methods has been identified as a way to avoid this and try to resolve trade-offs. Such collaborative negotiations can be facilitated by FAO upon request from a national government, commodity board or private operator engaged in developing GAP protocols either as extension tools or as guidelines in national programmes for product quality. When requested to do so, FAO could support national or local actors in prioritizing components of the GAP principles, based on agreed priority outcomes. The focus for FAO should be on developing participatory approaches for supporting such processes. Such methodologies use the range of expertise developed in FAO and elsewhere on multistakeholder negotiation and conflict resolution. This has started with meetings on GAP for meat production in S and E Africa (2004), for dairy production (S Africa, 2004) and the poultry sector (North Africa 2004) and cotton-cereal-livestock production systems in Burkina Faso (2004).

In this local definition process, FAO may also provide technical advice on sustainable technologies and processes that may help minimize trade-offs between different sustainability objectives.

One role for FAO's technical assistance in the GAP work will continue to consist in proposing economically and environmentally sustainable practices and processes which help minimize trade offs, providing advice on how to make the best use of a broad basket of new but also indigenous and traditional technology practices. FAO has a wide range of technical expertise and experience ranging from crop production and protection, water management and irrigation, soil fertility and plant nutrition, biotechnology and others. FAO can also build on its experience on participatory technology development, farmers field schools, Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices approaches and other participatory extension methods. This may also imply flagging potential promising research areas where knowledge and information are lacking. Initial pilot projects on GAP will provide guidelines on methodologies for defining pertinent practices and economic, environmental and social indicators. With respect to monitoring or assessment of environmental impacts of production, the question of how to monitor cumulative impacts beyond farm level will be an important issue to take into consideration, building on most recent methodological work in FAO and elsewhere.

3.2.4 Capacity building and policy advice

to support small and larger scale farmers in meeting existing GAP standards and codes and changing procurement practices set by retailers and the food industry, in strengthening institutions such as farmers organizations, extension services and other government institutions, and NGOs and CSOs which support the development and application of locally adapted GAP. Section 5 points out the range of expertise and capacity building experience on which FAO can build to respond to requests from developing countries with respect to GAP.

5. Areas of expertise which FAO can bring into GAP work

There is a wide range of expertise on which FAO can build to respond to requests from developing countries with respect to GAPs. The following section is probably not exhaustive, and any additions are welcome; indeed, better information-sharing on complementary activities is often pointed out by FAO staff as a pitfall common to FAO and other development agencies, and GAP is no exception. One challenge for FAO is to identify concrete opportunities and ways to better integrate this expertise to provide countries with more coordinated responses.

- FAO technical units such as AGPC, AGPP, AGAP, AGAH, AGST, ALLL, AGLW, FORC, FORM, FONP and FOPP, FIRI, FIPP, FIIT, SDRN are important sources of knowledge and material on many technical and economic aspects of good agricultural principles and practices (soil, water, crop and fodder production and protection, animal production, health and welfare, harvest and on-farm processing and storage, energy and waste management, forestry and agro-forestry, aquaculture, wildlife and landscape and biodiversity and others).
- Methodologies for impact monitoring are also being developed with particular respect to environmental impacts of agriculture by AGAL, AGLL, AGPP and maybe others. Experience with respect to the application of agro-ecological principles is of particular relevance.
- Body of experience from FAO work on farming systems information and typologies (AGSE, CH, AGL, AGA, SDRN and others).
- Social and environmental certification and labelling in crop and livestock production, fisheries and forestry; analysis of transaction costs for compliance with food safety and quality standards and production; value-chain analysis; how to reduce costs and the institutional innovations to reduce them (ESCR, ESCP, ESAE, AGSE, FIPP, FORC, FORM, FONP and FOPP, staff in regional offices in particular RLC).
- Training of trainers and institutional capacity building to ensure safety and quality of agricultural produce in particular for fresh foods and vegetables, coffee and other commodities; development of adequate laboratory facilities for product quality, lab quality assurance and control procedures; efficiency of sampling processing, etc. (ESNS, AGE, AGPC staff at headquarters, in RAP, RLC and elsewhere).
- Methodologies and approaches to support farmers experiential learning to improve their technical and managerial capacities, in particular by supporting Farmers Field Schools, participatory technology development and Knowledge Attitudes and Practices approaches; (SDRE, SDAR, FORC, FORM, FONP and FOPP, AGPP and others).
- Conflict management approaches and facilitation of multistakeholder negotiations; building alliances with private sector and NGOs (SDAR, FORC, FORM, FONP, FOPP, AGAL/Livestock, Environment and Development (LEAD), FIPL, TCDS and others).
- Capacity to provide comparative experiences through knowledge management systems and support (for instance, TECA, GAP database, LEAD database, SDRN remote sensing tools and others).