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Residue monitoring programs and MRL setting procedures in Latin America

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The world population increases progressively and, consequently, the global demand for food, feed and fiber will nearly double (FAO, 2016). In this context, it is worth mentioning that Latin America is considered a privileged region in relation to the diversity of natural resources, with 34% of the world's renewable water resources (ONU-Habitat, 2012). In addition, this region produces and exports food for millions of people worldwide (Avina, 2014). Therefore, it is reasonable to consider Latin America as a "food pantry" for the world in the future. Consequently, countries must take active measures to safeguard the food security and food safety including, among others, the monitoring and evaluation of the maximum limits for pesticide residues. Several Latin America countries have monitoring programs for pesticide residues. However, it is important to mention that these are in different stages of development, as well as the establishment of MRLs. The compilation of information related to the institutions responsible for the monitoring programs and the criterion for determining the MRLs in Latin America was conducted by means of a questionnaire answered by the representatives of each country for these topics. Since Latin America exports a large number of fruits and vegetables, both in and outside the region and based on its importance as "food pantry", it becomes essential to safeguard the food security and food safety, that can be affected, among other factors, by the presence of pesticide residues. Therefore, it is essential to have uniform criteria, which cross borders and thus reach a global MRL harmonization.

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Food safety standards and consumer confidence: Are we on the right direction?

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Consumers are the most important issue to focus on food safety and as consumers, they have the right to expect food commodities we purchase and consume will be safe and of high quality. Unfortunately, mandatory standards enacted by public institutions are limited for a determined country, but food chain does not become global. Therefore, food safety standards made by private institutions have emerged from social concerns (consumers risks perceptions) to major food markets. In this context, international food safety standards of private organizations have emerged to guarantee safe food in addition to mandatory requirements and to accomplish demands of consumers. However, the high amount of food safety standards for particular markets (mainly EU and USA), have caused innumerable efforts and additional costs that producers have to complain in order to be competitive in those external markets. The challenge of food safety standards for both public and private organizations is to harmonize food safety schemes in order that all stakeholders of the global food chain will be benefited. Additional issues also should be considered in order to involve all stakeholders and create global food value chain, as the case of enable inclusive and efficient agricultural and food systems, besides the pro-active role that should accomplish consumers as responsible of safe food inside their homes, reduce food waste and choose best food to be healthy (nutritional food safety).

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