



**Global Harmonization Initiative
at the IX World Spice Congress
Goa, India, January 28-30, 2008**

Dr. V. Prakash and Mr. Larry Keener, members of the executive committee of the Global Harmonization Initiative (GHI), described the emerging global need for harmonization of food safety laws and regulations and promoted the role of GHI in presentations given at the IX World Spice Congress, held in January in Goa, India. Attendees of the meeting included spice exporters, food scientists, technologists, engineers, and representatives from associated business entities and other leading world groups in the area of regulatory affairs.

The IX World Spice Congress's inaugural address was given by Mr. Jairam Ramesh, Minister of State for Commerce of India, who provided insight into India's spice production and trade activities and challenges. Minister Ramesh focused on several of the known issues with spice quality, as well as highlighted the potential and real benefits of both Indian agricultural resources and entrepreneurs to reach out to the world market with a clear mandate of many of the regulatory status perhaps purely depending and addressing the scientific and technological capacities of the country.

In "Business Session-I (Harmonizing)," Mr. Keener, president, International Product Safety Consultants, Inc, Seattle, Washington, USA, presented information on the GHI's progress in promoting harmonization of food safety legislation and regulation in his presentation "Global Harmonization Initiative." Dr. Prakash of CRTFI presented "The Scientific Way Forward in Business of Spices," which addressed the need for validation and acceptance of new technologies to assure food safety and quality, as well as the role such technologies can play in supporting global harmonization of food safety laws and regulations.

Both speakers highlighted the role that GHI is playing in terms of harmonizing food safety laws and regulations across the world through science-based consensus. Their presentations included analysis of the many of micro and macro differences that exist in current international laws and regulations and suggested that successful harmonization can be achieved by incorporating the GHI agenda into a common platform where all stakeholders can share the benefits of scientific information through networking. Both Mr. Keener and Dr. Prakash outlined next steps in GHI's mission to foster change in terms of standardization of disparate food safety laws and regulations.

Mr. Keener also stressed the need for industry to play a more proactive role by partnering with GHI to achieve benefits such as reducing legal or nationally codified trade barriers erected in the name of food safety. Harmonization of international regulatory system—with a clear mandate of transparency—can only happen when it is fundamentally based on science and not by political or economic considerations, he stated. When based on science, food safety laws will not become barriers to trade nor impede the application of emerging or advanced technologies that can help companies achieve cost-savings or production efficiencies as well as food safety benefits—clear advantages to food companies and consumers across the globe.

Similarly, Dr. Prakash emphasized the value-added benefit to the spice industry of a clear mandate to utilize the tools of advanced science. Specifically, he said, companies that use cutting-edge technologies and process innovations that enhance food safety should look at existing regulatory mandates to ensure that the food safety aspect of such technology will work throughout the entire operational chain. By interlinking technological application with regulatory compliance requirements, the company will be able to identify gaps in science that underpin current food safety laws, the first step in harmonization. Dr. Prakash noted that the consensus of a large group of scientists across the world who arrive at the same conclusion can drive the system of regulation, and further, that such a consensus would be dynamic based on the continuous progress of science.

*V. Prakash
16 February 2008*