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PRESS RELEASE

Government of Belize and FAO Validate National Food Control System Assessment and Present Strategic Action Plan

Belmopan, November 28, 2025.

The Government of Belize, in collaboration with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and in partnership with national competent authorities, concluded the assessment of Belize's national food control system and presented a Strategic Action Plan during a High-Level Meeting held at Dream Valley Jungle Resort on November 27, 2025. The assessment was conducted using the FAO/WHO Food Control System Assessment Tool, under the framework of project FVC/GLO/220/MUL aimed at strengthening food safety governance and control systems in Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and Least Developed Countries (LDCs).

Over the past nine months, Belize's food control authorities worked with FAO's facilitation team to collect, analyze, validate, and review data across all dimensions of the national food control system. The process included an inception workshop in March, extensive data collection through trained focal points, a multi-sectoral validation mission, and a three-day technical workshop held earlier in the week to review findings and develop priority actions for strengthening the system.

The high-level session brought together senior representatives from government ministries, development partners, producer associations, and academia to endorse the resulting Strategic Action Plan, which outlines Belize's roadmap toward a more modern, risk-based, and coordinated food control system.

"Belize has taken a major step forward," stated the Honourable Rodwell Ferguson, Minister of Agriculture, Food Security and New Growth Industries. "This assessment provides, for the first time, a comprehensive, system-wide diagnosis of our national food control system. It shows where we are performing well, and it highlights the areas requiring urgent attention. As we move into implementation, the leadership and collaboration of all ministries and stakeholders will be critical."

The Minister emphasized that food safety remains a national priority, fundamental not only to public health and consumer protection, but also to economic growth, agriculture, and trade. He reaffirmed the Government's commitment to implement the recommended actions and support producers, processors, and exporters in meeting enhanced standards.

Dr. Ana Touza, FAO Representative for Jamaica, the Bahamas, and Belize, also addressed the gathering, highlighting the commitment shown by Belize's competent authorities and the multi-sectoral effort that led to the successful completion of the assessment. "During the past nine months, Belize's food control regulatory authorities have worked closely with the FAO assessment team. This process has required time, effort, and strong coordination among stakeholders. Today, we mark the culmination of this collective effort," she noted. Dr. Touza expressed appreciation to all ministries and departments involved, including Agriculture, Health, Blue Economy, Foreign Affairs, Sustainable Development, Customs, and BAHA, for their sustained collaboration and leadership throughout the process.

The FAO/WHO Food Control System Assessment Tool provides a structured, transparent, and measurable framework to evaluate the performance of national food control systems and monitor progress over time. Using this tool, Belize has identified priority areas such as strengthening legislation, adopting risk-based inspection systems, enhancing laboratory capacity, improving stakeholder communication, and reinforcing governance and coordination mechanisms.

Throughout the technical workshop held from November 24 to 26, focal points from all competent authorities validated the draft assessment report, agreed on key priorities, and developed an actionable Strategic Action Plan that includes specific activities, responsibilities, timelines, and indicators for system strengthening. The plan was formally presented during today's session, along with the main findings and conclusions of the assessment.

Belize's assessment and planning process demonstrate a strong national commitment to strengthening its food control system in line with international standards, safeguarding consumer health, enhancing market competitiveness, and ensuring a resilient and sustainable agrifood sector.

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