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Director General of
Korea Central Customs
Laboratory

Message from the Director General of the KCCL

To the Members of the WCO,

Greetings. I am Park Jae-Sun, Director General of the Korea Central Customs Laboratory, and it is an honor to present this brief on the operation of the WCO Asia-Pacific (AP) Regional Customs Laboratory Korea.

First, I would like to express my sincere appreciation to the member countries in the Asia-Pacific region for their continued collaboration and information-sharing. Global trade has been showing signs of gradual recovery starting in 2024, after emerging from the downturn caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, and is establishing a foundation for re-growth. Along with economic growth, the importance of cooperation is becoming even more pronounced, and I hope that the Asia-Pacific customs laboratories will align with this positive trend and achieve even greater results through innovative analytical technology collaboration.

The year 2024 holds particular significance, as it marks the year I assumed the position of Director General of the Korea Central Customs Laboratory, one of the WCO Asia-Pacific RCLs. Over the past year, the KCCL has carried out various international activities, yielding fruitful results. I feel greatly rewarded by these accomplishments and would like to reflect on them and share the details of our endeavors.

From the second half of 2023 to the first half of 2024, we carried out the following activities:

- ▶ Attended the 8th European Customs Chemists' Seminar
- ▶ Held the 2023/2024 WCO RCL Professionals Programme (with participation from 4 countries)
- ▶ Enhanced the KCCL's English Website operation
- ▶ Hosted the 3rd WCO Asia-Pacific RCL Heads Meeting
- ▶ Completed the Capacity Building Program for the BOU
- ▶ Provided consulting for the establishment of a customs laboratory within the Tanzania Revenue Authority
- ▶ Engaged in the Customs Analytical Technology Field through participation in WCO international conferences

1. Participation in the 8th European Customs Chemists' Seminar (July 2 - July 6, 2023)

- Analysis of the Authenticity of Imported Fraudulent Food -

The European Customs Chemists' Seminar has been a triannual event since 2000, centering on European customs laboratories, where customs chemistry experts from various countries participate to share and collaborate on the latest analytical technologies, chemical and customs regulations, and issues related to hazardous materials. This seminar is not limited to EU members; it is open to experts from non-member countries and all WCO member countries, serving as a venue for sharing technical information, case studies, and building collaborative relationships. At the 8th European Customs Chemists' Seminar, held in Berlin, Germany, the Korea Central Customs Laboratory was the only participant from Asia.

The KCCL presented the latest customs analytical methods for detecting food fraud, as well as the activities of the WCO RCL Korea. Specifically, we gave a presentation on the authenticity testing methods for the extract of saw palmetto fruit, which was a key ingredient in imported health supplements that had been a major issue in Korea. The seminar served as a valuable opportunity for us to exchange the latest analytical information.

For example, we were able to acquire up-to-date customs analytical techniques and information on issues currently being discussed in Europe, such as "Analytical Methods for Detecting Fake Honey through Quantitative Analysis of HMF" and "Analysis of Semi-synthetic Cannabinoid Derivative HHC." The KCCL plans to attend the seminar again in two years to continue fostering the exchange of analytical information.



2. Held the 2023/2024 WCO RCL Professionals Programme (October 23 - November 30, 2023)

- Completion of the 6-Week Training Program for 4 WCO Member Countries -

Since being designated as a WCO Asia-Pacific Regional Customs Laboratory (RCL) in 2018, the Korea Central Customs Laboratory has run the WCO RCL Professionals Programme for the third time. This program, funded by the CCF-Korea, has been recognized as a successful initiative to offer capacity-building opportunities and customs analysis technologies required to foster customs analytical talents from developing countries. The four participants (from Argentina, Algeria, Tunisia, and Tanzania) first had a week-long training at the WCO Headquarters in Belgium. Following this, the RCL Korea conducted the Professionals Programme for six weeks, starting from October 23, 2023. The program included the following contents:

- ▶ Training on Analytical Techniques and Know-how for Establishing and Operating Customs Laboratories
- ▶ Theoretical and Hands-on Training on Customs Analysis Operations
- ▶ Introduction to K-HS Classification System and Latest Domestic and International Classification Cases
- ▶ Training on the Analysis of Export and Import Goods Using State-of-the-Art Analytical Equipment
- GC, HPLC, SEM, FT-IR, PCR, Py-GC/MS, XRD, XRF, etc.
- ▶ Introduction to Drug Detection Cases and Analytical Methods for New Psychoactive Substances
- ▶ Visits to Local Customs Laboratories and Major Local Exporters, Importers, and Manufacturers
- ▶ Participation in the Customs Analysis Technology Seminar
- ▶ Participants' Presentations and Review by Director General

Through this program, we have solidified our role as a WCO regional laboratory and established its standing as a technically advanced WCO member country in the customs analysis field. Additionally, the program has provided an opportunity to foster mutual exchange with the four countries that completed the training.

As the program progresses each year, we have moved beyond one-way instruction to include discussions on key issues related to specific goods in each country, highlighting the importance of interactive communication. In 2024, we dedicated time to exchanging classification opinions and understanding the rationale behind them in each country. In addition, at the request of the participating countries, we provided information on essential laboratory facilities, including ventilation systems, heating and cooling systems, as well as the status of wastewater treatment facilities.

The RCL Korea will closely analyze the feedback and additional requests from the participants regarding this program and incorporate them into the planning of the next program. Through this, we aim to continuously enhance the quality of the program and broaden the training, enabling us to make consistent improvements.



3. Enhanced the KCCL's English Website Operation (March 2024 - Present)

- Uploading Customs Analysis Videos and RCL Activities -

In May 2019, the KCCL set up an English website (www.customs.go.kr/rcl/) with the aim of enhancing international cooperation following the designation of the Asia-Pacific Regional Customs Laboratory (RCL). The website serves as a platform for exchanging customs analysis technology and communication with WCO member countries. In March 2024, we uploaded customs analysis videos related to HS classification and regularly update the site with information on our local and international activities.

The videos are uploaded under a newly created category, [Analysis Video], in the [Analysis Information] section at the top of the homepage. Currently, the following videos are available:

- ① Alcohol Content Analysis Method for Beverages (HS Chapter 22)
- ② Fatty Acid Composition Analysis Method (HS Chapter 15)
- ③ DNA Analysis Method

By uploading these analysis videos, which are part of the training covered during the WCO RCL Professionals Programme, we have made it accessible to different member countries, allowing them to learn anytime and anywhere. Specifically, we aim to seamlessly provide advanced analytical technology to countries in need of establishing customs laboratories and to help refresh the knowledge of those who have completed the program.

The website operates on a membership basis, allowing members to access all these resources upon registration. Currently, WCO member countries, including Nepal, Uzbekistan, the Philippines, Indonesia, and others, have already joined.

The KCCL plans to upload additional analytical videos and hopes that our website will become a central platform for sharing customs analytical technology with increased participation from more member countries.

The screenshot displays the KCCL website interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with 'HOME', 'LOGIN', and 'SITEMAP' links. Below this is a header section with the KCCL logo and navigation tabs: 'About the KCCL', 'News', 'Notices', 'International Cooperation', and 'Analysis Information'. The main banner features a laboratory setting with a DNA double helix graphic and the text: 'In a rapidly changing environment, the Korea Central Customs Laboratory challenges and dedication to the self, try to introduce advanced latest technology services with passion.' Below the banner are icons for 'Analysis Service', 'Training Service', 'Consulting Service', and 'Tools'. The 'Last News' section shows two recent updates: '2023 Training Service Case III-On-Site Capacity Build...' (dated 01.30.2024) and '2023 Training Service Case II-WCO RCL Professionals...' (dated 01.30.2024). The 'What's new' section includes two entries: '[Republic of Uzbekistan] The role and responsibility...' (dated 12.04.2023) and '[Japan-Central Customs Laboratory] Regarding Star...' (dated 12.04.2023). A 'Favorites Menu' on the right lists 'Organization Chart', 'Analysis Equipments', and 'Standard Methods'. On the far right, three video thumbnails are visible, titled 'Analysis of alcohol content in beverages', 'Analysis of DNA', and 'Analysis of vegetable oil(GC)'.

4. Hosted the 3rd WCO Asia-Pacific RCL Heads Meeting (April 23 - April 25, 2024)

- Joined by Heads of 5 Asia-Pacific Regional Customs Laboratories -

The 3rd WCO Asia-Pacific RCL Heads Meeting, aimed at strengthening mutual cooperation and promoting information exchange among RCLs in the Asia-Pacific region, was held from April 23 to April 25, 2024, in Jinju, where the KCCL is located. This meeting was held in hybrid mode with the participation of five customs laboratory heads from India, Indonesia, Japan, China, and Korea, as well as representatives from the ROCB A/P, the WCO Secretariat, and members from African customs laboratories, totaling around 30 participants.

During the meeting, participants shared the latest activities of WCO agencies and individual countries, as well as drug detection cases, promoting information exchange among customs laboratories. We also discussed the development of the WCO RCL Professionals Programme and explored ways to enhance our cooperation for capacity-building in the customs analysis field. Additionally, we discussed supporting ideas for the designation of regional customs laboratories in the African region. On the third day of the meeting, participants visited the Busan Customs Integrated Surveillance Control Center, toured the local customs laboratory, and visited the Busan North Port redevelopment site, concluding the three-day meeting.

Through this meeting, we confirmed the need to strengthen the expertise of WCO RCL and the importance of information sharing among RCLs. The meeting provided a valuable opportunity to promote smooth exchanges within the international customs community, supported by Asia-Pacific regional customs laboratories, and to outline the future direction of customs analysis. I take great pride in successfully hosting this WCO RCL Heads Meeting and promise to actively participate in the collaborative endeavors and initiatives as discussed.



5. Completed the Capacity Building Program for the BOC

- ▶ 1st Year: Online Capacity Building Training on Customs Analysis Technology (September 2022)
- ▶ 2nd Year:
 - On-site Training on Establishing Customs Analysis Procedures and Improving Analysis Technologies in the Philippines (June 2023);
 - Capacity Building on Enhancing Customs Analysis Technology and Strengthening Analytical Capacity in South Korea (August 2023)
- ▶ 3rd Year: Training on Advanced Customs Administration Systems in South Korea (August 2024)

The KCCL participated in an ODA capacity-building program organized by KOICA, an agency under the Ministry of Foreign

Affairs. Since 2022, we have been conducting the "Capacity Building Program for the Establishment of Customs Analysis Procedures and Enhancement of Customs Analysis" for the Philippine Bureau of Customs (BOC) over three years.

The Philippine BOC recognized the need for a customs laboratory to ensure accurate tax assessments, public health safety, and social safety. In response, they requested consulting support for the re-establishment and operation of their customs laboratory, which had been destroyed by fire in 2007.

In the first year, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we conducted online training on customs analytical technology. In the second year, the KCCL visited the Philippine BOC to provide on-site training on establishing customs analysis procedures and improving analytical technologies. That year, we also hosted a delegation of seven representatives, including the Director of the Import and Assessment Service. During the visit, we toured their facilities, reviewed the operation of analytical equipment, and shared valuable information on using analytical technology for customs analysis. Additionally, we provided further insights into the analytical methods and equipment required for reviewing major export and import goods in the Philippines.

In the third year, we provided customized training for the dedicated analysis staff involved in operating the Philippine Customs Laboratory. The key training topics covered included systems necessary for laboratory operations, laboratory safety management, drug detection and analysis methods, analysis techniques for key export and import goods in the Philippines, and information on required analytical equipment.

During this phase, a workshop was conducted to discuss the establishment of the customs laboratory. Topics included budgeting for the laboratory's re-establishment and operation, identifying necessary analytical equipment, staffing, training, and the legal framework. Participants also visited the Busan New Port Container X-ray Inspection Center and the local customs laboratory to learn about the latest analytical equipment and key seized items.

Through this training program, the RCL Korea has contributed to the development of specialized personnel in customs analytical technology at the Philippine BOC. As a result, the Philippine BOC has made tangible progress toward establishing their customs laboratory, including securing a laboratory site, addressing legal matters, and hiring analysis staff.



6. Provided Consulting for the Establishment of a Customs Laboratory in Tanzania

- ▶ 1st : On-site Training in Tanzania on HS Classification and Customs Analytical Technology (December 2023)
- ▶ 2nd : Request for Materials Related to the Establishment of a Customs Laboratory from Tanzania (January 2024)
- ▶ 3rd : Tanzanian Delegation's Visit to the Korea Central Customs Laboratory (June 2024)

In February 2023, the Korea Customs Service and the Tanzania Revenue Authority (TRA) signed an MOU to collaborate on advancing Tanzania's electronic customs clearance system. As part of this collaboration, the TRA requested consulting support for establishing and operating a customs laboratory, along with a feasibility study for the electronic customs system. In response, a KCCL delegation visited Tanzania in December 2023 to introduce Korea's customs laboratory's tasks, facilities, and management as a WCO Asia-Pacific RCL. The team also presented the role of the WCO Asia-Pacific RCL and its international activities as part of a capacity-building program. A Q&A session was held to address questions about establishing and operating Tanzania's customs laboratory, with relevant materials provided to assist the process.



Following the visit, Tanzania requested additional materials related to HS classification, analysis, and laboratory construction. These materials were provided in an official letter signed by the Director General of KCCL.

In June 2024, a delegation of five Tanzanian officials, including a participant from the 2023 WCO RCL Professionals Programme, visited the KCCL for due diligence regarding their customs laboratory project. The visit included a tailored tour program focusing on the KCCL's facilities and operational processes, allowing for a focused understanding despite the short duration of the visit. During the visit, we held a Q&A session on key issues such as personnel, legal frameworks, necessary facilities, and equipment for establishing a customs laboratory.

We also discussed the strategic advantages of Tanzania's geographical location in East Africa and agreed that expanding government infrastructure, such as a customs laboratory, could serve as a turning point for advancing customs analysis in the African region. This visit reaffirmed Tanzania's strong commitment to establishing a customs laboratory, which, if successful, will significantly contribute to the development of trade and customs administration in the region. We are committed to providing ongoing support and cooperation.

7. Engaged in the Customs Analytical Technology Field through Participation in WCO International Conferences

1) Participation in the 39th WCO Scientific Sub-Committee (SSC)

The Korea Central Customs Laboratory attends the WCO Scientific Sub-Committee (SSC) annually to discuss scientific and technical issues related to HS classification. From January 16 to 19, 2023, the 39th SSC was held at the WCO headquarters, and we actively participated in discussions on the classification of substances INN 128 and INN 129, the appropriateness of analysis methods for roasted shelled mung beans, and the feasibility of customs analysis for cell-cultured meat. Additionally,

as a WCO Asia-Pacific RCL, we presented our capacity-building activities and plans for 2024, concluding the session with an outline of our future initiatives.

2) Participation in the 72nd and 73rd HS Committee Meetings

The HS Committee, under the WCO Committee and Council Committee, ensures uniform interpretation and application of the Harmonized System (HS) and addresses updates and policy issues related to the HS. The KCCL participated as a delegation at the 72nd HS Committee (September 2023) and the 73rd HS Committee (March 2024) meetings.

Korea Customs Service proposed several items for clearer classification, including roasted shelled mung beans, concentrated juice preparation for beverage manufacturing, sesame snacks, and products treated with brine for temporary preservation. These items were discussed during the two meetings, with RCL Korea actively engaging in the classification disputes.

3) Participation in the 63rd and 64th HS Review Subcommittee Meetings

The HS Review Subcommittee, operating under the HS Committee, reviews amendments to the Harmonized System (HS), including revisions to the HS Explanatory Notes and evaluations of classification opinions. The KCCL participated in the 63rd HS Review Subcommittee Meeting (November 2023) and the 64th HS Review Subcommittee Meeting (May 2024). We presented our insights on several proposed amendments related to HS 2028, including amendments for the classification of dietary supplements, plant-based milk substitutes, and reagents under heading 38.22.

Moving forward, RCL Korea plans to actively participate in WCO-led HS meetings, focusing on reviewing scientific and technical issues and providing classification opinions on contested goods. We are committed to continuing our engagement with WCO Asia-Pacific RCLs by exchanging classification reasoning and collaborating on joint responses to emerging issues.



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