

**Exchange Patterns and Practices:
Preliminary Findings from a Study of Movement and Use of
Food and Agriculture Genetic Resources
among the US-based Community of Users**

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) sponsored a side event on July 14, 2010, during the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) Access and Benefit Sharing (ABS) Working Group (WG) – 9 meeting in Montreal, Canada, on preliminary findings of a USDA/National Institute of Food and Agriculture-funded study of U.S. users and providers of genetic resources. A USDA representative introduced the presentation and provided background and context for this project as well as underscoring USDA engagement of ABS for genetic resources of significance to food and agriculture. Prof. Jennifer “Vern” Long and Prof. Eric Welch of the University of Illinois – Chicago, Science, Technology, and Environment Policy Lab, presented the study findings.

As described in the slides available on the CBD website, the presentation illustrated the similarities and differences for access, use, and benefit sharing practices of different communities of users of genetic resources of relevance to food and agriculture (GRFA). One key theme that emerged from the study is that there are regulatory systems in place that govern the movement of biological material for sanitary, phytosanitary, and national security reasons. These systems could potentially provide a framework for monitoring the movement of materials in an emergent ABS regime, in lieu of developing additional costly and burdensome regulatory infrastructures. Though there are regulatory systems in place, the way they operate differs significantly across sectors. Using them for additional purposes would require careful consideration of many factors, including delegating the appropriate competent authority and ensuring that systems are effectively integrated, given the differing goals of the systems.

Questions from the audience included a queries regarding the basis for selection of cases especially in terms of involvement of native communities, and issues on public commons. The panelists explained that the goal was not to be comprehensive for all categories of GRFA, but rather to identify examples that demonstrated the variability in access and use patterns across food and agriculture genetic resources.