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BIOSAFETY PROTOCOL NEWS

A MAGAZINE ON THE CARTAGENA PROTOCOL ON BIOSAFETY

CBD
Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity

SPECIAL FOCUS BIOSAFETY CLEARING-HOUSE

Experiences and Lessons Learned in:

Africa

Asia

Central and Eastern Europe

Latin America

-Perú (Artículo En Español)

-Uruguay

BIOSAFETY PROTOCOL NEWS

-THE CARTAGANA PROTOCOL ON BIOSAFETY: ENSURING THE SAFE TRANSPORT, HANDLING AND USE OF LIVING MODIFIED ORGANISMS (LMOS)

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Ahmed Djoghlaf, Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity

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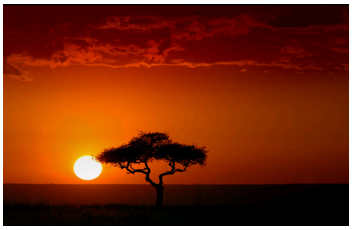

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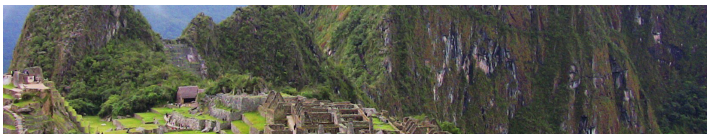

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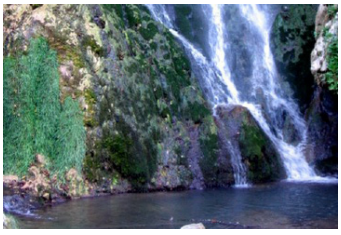


Foreword

by **Ahmed Djoghlaf** ● Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity

Sharing Information and the Biosafety Clearing-House

This seventh issue of the Biosafety Protocol News highlights experiences and lessons learned in facilitating the exchange of information on living modified organisms (LMOs) through the Biosafety Clearing-House (BCH). Article 20, paragraph 1, of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety established the BCH (the BCH is available at http://bch.cbd.int/) to:

a. Facilitate the exchange of scientific, technical, environmental and legal information on, and experience with, living modified organisms; and

b. Assist Parties to implement the Protocol, taking into account the special needs of developing country Parties, in particular the least developed and small island developing States among them, and countries with economies in transition as well as countries that are centres of origin and centres of genetic diversity.

Since the release of the Pilot Phase of the BCH by the Secretariat in 2001 and its transition to the fully operational phase in 2004, the BCH has undergone several improvements. The Secretariat has released several versions of the BCH Management Centre with improvements on different features and functionalities, including user friendliness, data quality control and new tools, such online forums. To date, there are two categories of information in the BCH. These are the national records and the reference records.

The Secretariat has also collaborated with a number of organizations to build capacities of Parties to effectively use the BCH. In particular, the Secretariat has worked with the United Nations Environment Programme –Global Environment Facility (UNEP-GEF) in implementing a project entitled "Building Capacity for Effective Participation in the Biosafety Clearing House (BCH) of the Cartagena Protocol". The objective of the project is to strengthen the capacity of countries to access and use the BCH through training of key stakeholders, providing computer hardware and software for data storage and exchange and development and dissemination of an interactive computer-based training packages.

Contributors to this issue of the newsletter shared their experiences and lessons learned from the UNEP-GEF BCH capacity-building projects. Most of them discussed the needs and challenges in their region regarding facilitating the exchange of information on LMOs through the BCH, the experience gained and the lessons learned so far in building capacity for the effective participation through the project, the collaboration between countries, and the effectiveness in achieving the objectives of the Protocol.

Many contributors identified the workshops and training materials developed during the projects as, among other things, providing an opportunity to share information and technology. Consequently, the means of accessing information, particularly accurate and updated information, through the BCH and the national nodes has been developed and improved. They also highlighted the importance of the Regional Advisors (RAs) system for countries to gain advice, support and training from key experts to, among other things, build capacity to manage and use the BCH and its national nodes. From the experiences, they highlighted that future projects are needed to ensure additional information shared in the BCH.

Although further efforts are necessary, most countries are participating in the BCH and its national nodes. From the articles contributed, it is clear that human, technical and operational capacity have been built for sharing information and fulfilling the obligations under the Protocol. I would therefore like to thank all contributors who shared their experiences and lessons learned in highlighting the challenges and successes in implementing Article 20 under the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety.

SECTION I /

BIOSAFETY CLEARING-HOUSE

Facilitating the exchange of information on,
and experience with,
living modified organisms

UNEP-GEF BCH project in Africa

EXPERIENCES AND LESSONS LEARNED FROM AN EGYPIAN EXPERT

by **Ossama A.El-Kawy, PhD** ● Dr. Ossama A.El-Kawy, PhD is Scientific Advisor for the Egyptian Environmental Affairs Agency and the UNEP-GEF-BCH Regional Advisor on Cartagena Protocol on the Biosafety. He can be contacted at: elkawyo@gmail.com

Many activities on biosafety and living modified organisms (LMOs) have been taking place in Africa. However, due to the lack of information, knowledge and capacity on these issues, there is a growing governmental and public concern that informed policy options and choices may not be properly considered. To date, experience in the region is limited.

The Biosafety Clearing-House (BCH) was established by Article 20 of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety to facilitate the exchange of scientific, technical, environmental and legal information on, and experience with LMOs. It was also set up to assist Parties with implementing the Protocol, taking into account the special needs of developing countries.

In 2002, the Intergovernmental Committee for the Cartagena Protocol (ICCP) identified national components as essential for enabling Parties to provide information to the BCH in accordance with their obligations under the Protocol and for ensuring access to information available through the BCH for decision making. The sixth meeting of the Conference of the Parties the Convention on Biological Diversity's (COP-6) also specifically requested the Global Environment Facility (GEF) to provide for national capacity-building in biosafety, in particular to enable effective participation in the BCH in order to address the urgent need of Parties (Decision VI/17, paragraph 10 (b)). Soon after, the United Nations Environment Programme-Global Environment Facility (UNEP-GEF) BCH project was launched.

In Africa the project succeeded in providing the 45 participating countries with appropriate training as well as computer software and hardware. Access to the BCH was improved by increasing, among other things, Internet connectivity. The different levels of computer literacy and capacity needs of different countries were taken into account. The Regional Advisors spent a total of 789 workdays providing consultations and facilitating national workshops and over 355 work days on global missions in the participating African countries.

> The most significant achievement of the BCH project was the creation of national nuclei of human resources

The most significant achievement of the BCH project was the creation of national nuclei of human resources. Each country that participated in the project now has a core group of people that are able to effectively use the BCH. These include officials from relevant government sectors such as agriculture, fisheries, forestry, industry, environment, education, manufacturing, trade and health, as well as community and private sector stakeholders.

The project initially encountered difficulties because countries had not assigned specific persons to carry out the BCH activities at the national level. The participating countries had the responsibility to appoint and cover the costs of a national project coordinator to handle and manage all the BCH project activities at the country level. This has, in the long run, led to the success of the project. It resulted in more sustained capacity and continued use of the BCH after the project ended.

The greatest challenge for the BCH global team was assisting countries in assessing their specific situations and needs and choosing the most suitable option for effective national participation in the BCH. Countries had the following four options:

- Option 1: Entering and managing country data via the BCH Central Portal.

- Option 2: Sending information to the CBD Secretariat via mail, fax, e-mail, or CD-ROM.

- Option 3: Creating and managing a database of required information that interacts with the BCH Central Portal through the Internet and allows the Central Portal to "pull" information from it.

- Option 4: Creating and managing a database of required information that interacts with the BCH Central Portal through the Internet to "push" information from the database to the Central Portal.

The BCH project complemented the other global capacity-building initiatives for the effective implementation of the Protocol. The BCH assisted in making information on existing biosafety legislative and regulatory frameworks and the lessons learned more accessible to Parties. In addition, infrastructure and expertise gained through the project have been applied to other areas of information exchange, such as upgrading and maintaining online information on biodiversity through the clearing-house mechanism of the CBD.

> By the end of the UNEP-GEF project, capacity in Africa to use and manage the BCH was greatly improved. More information is now available to help assess and manage risks associated with the transboundary movement of LMOs

Perhaps one of the most important lessons learned from the BCH project is that countries' needs are better met through expert advice rather than through classroom training. A core group of trained Regional Advisors established under the project provided valuable advice, support and training needed in the respective regions. Language and cultural compatibility, similar work styles and ethics, and shared social and economic realities made the advice and services provided by Regional Advisors more welcome and readily acceptable than those provided by outside experts. The system of trained Regional Advisors, supported with good materials and a focus on lessons learned, contributed to long-term sustainability and in-country capacity. By building training skills among regional experts, the BCH project reached more people than it would have if only a few individuals were trained within a country. Thus, it has proved to be both effective and sustainable.

Photo courtesy of *Sebastien Mamy*, www.flickr.com/photos/sebastien_mamy/ (Nile Fishing - Egypt)

By the end of the project, capacity in the region to use and manage the BCH was greatly improved. More information is now available to help assess and manage risks associated with the transboundary movement of LMOs. Consolidated capacities in this area have helped to detect and fill gaps in the functioning of the biosafety management system at the national, regional and global level. Increasingly, African countries are using the BCH to complement national planning and decision-making processes. This has resulted in concrete change. However, there is a growing consensus among African countries that another BCH project is needed. A new project would complement and sustain what has been achieved so far, preventing the loss of experienced staff members and addressing the issue of financial sustainability.

Experiences and Lessons Learned of the BCH in Africa

EXPERIENCES AND LESSONS LEARNED FROM AFRICA BY AN KENYAN EXPERT

by **Alex Owusu-Biney, PhD** ● Dr. Alex Owusu-Biney, PhD is Regional Coordinator for Africa (Biosafety) Division of GEF Coordination United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). He can be contacted at: Alex.Owusu-Biney@unep.org

The Biosafety Clearing-House (BCH) is the information exchange mechanism established under Article 20 of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety. As a major international environmental treaty, the Cartagena Protocol highlights information-sharing as one of the fundamental pillars to ensure transparency in the governance mechanism for the safe use and transboundary movement of living modified organisms (LMOs). The BCH was established to facilitate the exchange of scientific, technical, environmental and legal information on, and experience with, LMOs.

The BCH provides a dynamic platform where information is registered, through its Management Centre,[1] for easy access and retrieval. Currently, the primary source of information on the function and implementation of the BCH is found on the BCH website under modalities of operation[2] and the multi-year programme of work for the operation of the BCH.

> It is important to ensure that the BCH is positioned as a pillar on which the Protocol rests

1 The website can be found at https://bch.cbd.int/managementcentre/

2 The website can be found at https://bch.cbd.int/about/modalities.shtml

Current Status of the BCH in Africa

To date, support to assist Parties to implement their obligations under the BCH has been through the United Nations Environment Programme - Global Environment Facility (UNEP–GEF) Project on Building Capacity for Effective Participation in the Biosafety Clearing-House. This project was created to provide advice, training and equipment. The objective was to ensure that countries have the capacity to access, utilize, and manage the scientific technical, environmental and legal information available through the BCH.

The BCH project, which started in March 2004 with support from the GEF, international development partners and the Convention on Biological Diversity, was developed to support other projects on biosafety such as the UNEP-GEF Project on Development of National Biosafety Frameworks (NBFs) and the demonstration projects on Implementation of National Biosafety Frameworks. In Africa, the BCH Project was implemented in 46 out of the 48 countries that were originally targeted. It was not implemented in South Africa or Angola, although Angola participated in national and regional training activities along with all the other countries.

Through the interactions and feedback from the participating countries, several supportive tools, including training materials,[3] were developed in order to address a two fold need: 1) to meet the obligations of sharing information through the BCH and 2) to create biosafety websites to meet national needs. The countries mainly used the Hermes and Ajax applications to create their websites. Another important support structure, the Regional Advisor system,[4] was developed to provide advisory services in the development of agreements between UNEP and the participating countries, the selection of information dissemination methods (the four options),[5] training and equipment needs and delivery. The regional advisory service has been useful in providing a regional core of support for the BCH. Hopefully, it will be used by countries beyond the UNEP-GEF interventions.

3 The training materials are available at www.unep.org/biosafety

4 The information related to the Regional Advisor system is available at www.unep.org/biosafety/Documents/BCH/BCH_RA_Flyer.pdf

5 The four options are as follows: Option 1 – Use of the management centre, Option 2 – Use of email, fax, CD etc; Option 3 – the "pull" mechanism; Option 4 – the "push" mechanism

Needs and Challenges

A review of the BCH project in Africa highlights the importance of emphasizing the obligations under Article 20 of the Protocol. It is crucial to continuously emphasize that participation in the BCH is mandatory for all Parties to the Protocol and not voluntary. It is also important to develop operational BCH infrastructure and human capacity through a dedicated national effort. Furthermore, support must be sustained as part of the wider biosafety implementation process, keeping in line with other national obligations under the Protocol. A review of policy and a strengthening of the regulatory processes of the NBFs should ensure that there is legislative backing for meeting the obligations under the BCH as well as resources for data collection and maintenance of the national BCH nodes. It is also important to ensure that the BCH is positioned as a pillar on which the Protocol rests. As information-sharing is fundamental to biosafety governance, there is a need for a sustained effort, both nationally and internationally, to develop mechanisms to facilitate the collection and exchange of information through the BCH.

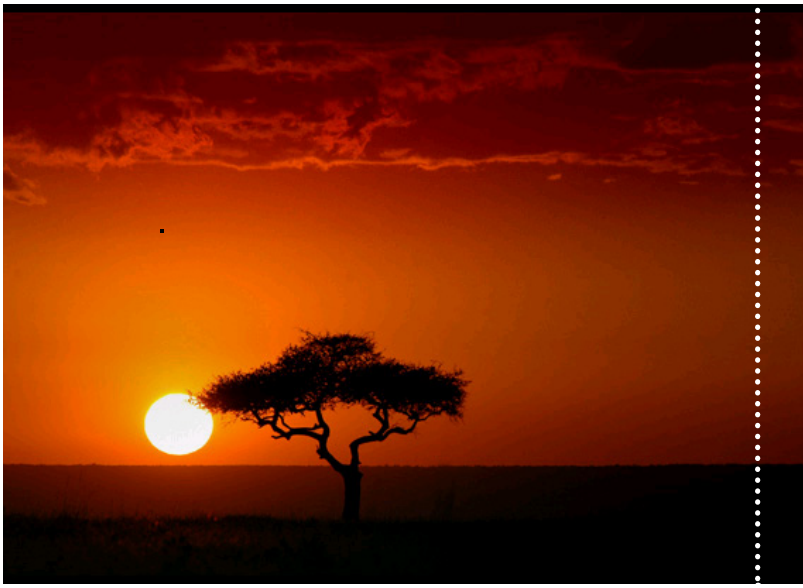
Collaboration between African Countries

The implementation of information-sharing through the BCH calls for collaboration among participating countries. This is also a direct response to trade protocols and development mechanisms among several regional Economic communities (RECs). While attempts are being made to develop bilateral and multilateral arrangements on biosafety at the African regional level, it is important, in the spirit of Article 14, to make this known to the BCH. It is also important to develop data-harmonization protocols to share, for example, data on biological diversity and risk assessment among countries. Although it is not mandatory, under the Protocol, to make this information available through the BCH, it would be useful in decision-making which has transboundary implications.

Conclusion

The BCH is not an information technology (IT) tool but rather an information exchange mechanism under the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety. It is important to make this clear to all stakeholders. Also as mentioned earlier, participation in the BCH is an obligation for all Parties. It should be sustained through dedicated national effort and supported by strengthened policy and regulatory frameworks. In that vein, countries and regions should, through collaborative efforts, make resources available to develop the national systems and frameworks beyond the scope of the project phase. Currently, many countries have websites and databases which are maintained through national budgetary allocations. It is important that national nodes are linked to government sites which have sustainable IT support. In addition, governments must dedicate IT resources and create appropriate national networks to facilitate data entry and access to biosafety information (including non-obligatory information such as laboratory and field trials, areas where many African countries have data). Furthermore, national BCH focal points should continuously update data submitted to the BCH. Though the BCH is designed to be dynamic, most country data is static and needs constant updating. For example, research shows there are presently about 10 legal instruments being developed on biosafety in Africa. Most African countries have not uploaded their laws to the BCH, as required under the Protocol.

Photo courtesy of *Einar Ragnar*, www.flickr.com/photos/eirasi/ (Sunset in Kenya - Masai Mara)



Finally, it is important for Parties to understand that information-sharing is an obligation under Article 20 of the Protocol. They are required to provide data on their national laws, decisions regarding importation of LMOs, summaries of risk assessments and national reports on measures being taking to implement the Protocol. It is an issue of both transparency and compliance with the provisions of the Protocol.

UNEP-GEF BCH Projects: Challenges and Successes in Asia

EXPERIENCES AND LESSONS LEARNED FROM A LEBANESE EXPERT

by **By Elsa Sattout, PhD** ● Dr. Elsa Sattout, PhD is the UNEP CPB Regional Training Advisor for Asia (2006-2008). She can be contacted at: e.j.sattout@gmail.com

As of July 2009, 110 countries has completed the development of their National Biosafety Frameworks (NBFs) with support from a project funded by Global Environment Facility (GEF) through the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). More than 20 of these countries are in Asia. This project has generated a wealth of in-country experience in building capacity for biosafety and in linking national and regional experts and key stakeholders who constitute a driving force behind the implementation of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety.

> The lessons learned in Asia have contributed to the establishment of regional platforms. These in turn have facilitated collaboration between Asian countries and among different partners and enhanced their ability to achieve the objectives of the Protocol.

The UNEP-GEF project on Building Capacity for Effective Participation in the Biosafety Clearing-House (BCH), which was approved in 2004 as an add-on to the UNEP-GEF global project on Development of NBFs, was also a cornerstone leading to the development of core global and regional human resources. The project succeeded in establishing appropriate ***in situ*** BCH infrastructure and human resource capacity which will enable countries to participate in and benefit from the global BCH and assist them in complying with their obligations under the Protocol.

As a result of the BCH project, most Asian countries have benefited not only from training workshops for stakeholders involved in the implementation of the Protocol, but also from the strengthening of institutional, administrative and human capacities of relevant national public agencies, especially those working on biodiversity protection. The training sessions targeted representatives from Competent National Authorities (CNAs), the private sector and relevant stakeholders who are the main actors in the implementation of the national biosafety frameworks. The project provided countries with road maps for sustainable participation in the BCH operations.

Needs and Challenges

Many countries in Asia still need guidance on how to implement their NBFs and the Protocol's provisions. The advancement of some of the Asian countries in this field has helped in the transfer of technology and the exchange of information, for example through regional workshops. The BCH project has also helped boost and institutionalize the information-exchange mechanisms. However, many national stakeholders in countries with centres of origin of biodiversity are still facing the challenge of mainstreaming the NBF implementation process into their national agenda. There is a need to systematically build the systemic and institutional capacities needed to effectively implement the NBFs. There is also a need to prioritize the mandates for the implementation of the Protocol's provisions, especially those concerning information exchange and knowledge-sharing.

Meanwhile, ensuring the sustainability of the BCH country activities after the project has ended remains a big challenge. It depends on various factors particularly those relating to human resources and technologies. In Asia, sustaining the BCH operations in order to meet the obligations under the Protocol will require: (1) integration of national BCH nodes and the terms of reference of the BCH task forces into the governmental structure, (2) capacity-building at national and regional levels, (3) regional collaboration on fund-raising for the sustainability of the BCH, and (4) allocation of government funding and supplementary funds towards national BCH activities.

Lessons Learned

The development of the BCH project enabled many countries to benefit from the lessons learned by others and also left behind a framework for future similar capacity-building projects. The tools and products that were developed will ensure a sustainable in-house learning process in each country after the project. There were lessons learned at different levels including:

1. The operational level for the BCH national nodes;

2. The organizational level where participants and target groups were selected;

3. The technical level, including national training and regional workshops for national stakeholders on the access and use of the BCH and biosafety-related data entry; and

4. The educational level encompassing the development and dissemination of materials and tools (e.g. the BCH training modules) by the project leaders and regional advisors.

The development of tools and the publication of lessons learned in multiple languages have facilitated the use of the training modules developed under the project, especially in the Arab-speaking countries. The lessons learned have contributed to the establishment of regional platforms. These in turn have facilitated collaboration between Asian countries and among different partners and enhanced their ability to achieve the objectives of the Protocol.

Future Vision

Regional and national experience in Asia, especially in the Middle East and Arab countries, has demonstrated the need for a long-term vision based on close cooperation and partnership. This will involve development of regional platforms and strategies for technology transfer and cooperation, as well as strengthening research and education.

The availability of information, tools and guidelines related to biosafety in Arabic is of great importance. The initial lack of translation of the BCH Central Portal in other UN languages was a constraint for Arab-speaking countries in Asia during the first implementation phase of the NBF and BCH projects.

Photo courtesy of *Remsi,* www.flickr.com/photos/15635500@N00/ (Al Rahman and Pine forest in Lebanon)

Future projects should aim at establishing a regional BCH hub which would bring many benefits and opportunities for countries. Some of the benefits would include the following:

1. Information available in Arabic, English and French;

2. Cooperation and exchange on best practices in risk assessment and management;

3. Interactive e-library for the biosafety regulations and guidelines of West Asian countries.;

4. An address book integrating a diversified roster of experts;

5. A regional list-server; and

6. An interactive information exchange tool for regional networks of communities of practice on biotechnology and biosafety.

Challenges remain on how to reinforce the countries' systemic, institutional and individual capacities to better implement the provisions of the Protocol. In order to address these challenges, we need to ask ourselves the following questions: (a) Is it a matter of striving to reach these goals or an issue of changing our way of thinking and prioritization? and (b) Is it a matter of overloading social communities with biodiversity conservation aspects while the awareness is still lacking at the level of citizens?

The UNEP- GEF BCH projects in Central and Eastern Europe

EXPERIENCE AND LESSONS LEARNED FROM A SERBIAN EXPERT

by **Aleksej Tarasjev, PhD** ● Dr. Aleksej Tarasjev, PhD is Senior Researcher in the Institute for Biological Research, University of Belgrade, Serbia and Cartagena Protocol CEE Regional Advisor. He can be contacted at: tarasjev@yandex.ru

The Biosafety Clearing-House (BCH) capacity-building project is a global biosafety project run by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF). Sixteen countries from the Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) region, which under the GEF classification also includes some Caucasus and Central Asia countries, participated in the project. Countries in the CEE region were formerly socialist countries and are undergoing or have undergone a transition process. Some of the participating countries are now member states of the European Union (EU) and several other countries intend to become EU members. The BCH project in the CEE region led to significant capacity-building for the information exchange component of the national biosafety systems. It also helped countries identify their information-exchange needs and challenges.

The BCH project was launched at the national level in 2005. During its four-year period, numerous national workshops were held and several hundred stakeholders from the region were trained. The first workshop was held in the Republic of Moldova and the last in the Kyrgyz Republic in June of 2009. These activities were supported by six regional advisors, three for the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety and three for Information Technologies, who were trained by UNEP. Regional advisors presented their experiences and lessons learned in mission reports which were made available through an online project management system known as ANUBIS. Experiences were also shared at the annual meetings of all regional advisors.

Furthermore, CEE countries participated in global BCH training workshops held in conjunction with the meetings of the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Protocol (COP MOP). The 2007 BCH training event in Cairo included two regional workshops for the CEE countries. One was held in English and the other in Russian. In addition, Slovenia convened a BCH training workshop for Competent National Authorities (CNAs) from the European Union (EU).

Regional workshops provided direct opportunity for exchange of experiences and lessons learned between the CEE countries. Furthermore, lessons learned from the EU experiences in fulfilling specific information sharing obligations under the Protocol (such as the Advanced Informed Agreement procedure) were valuable not only to EU candidate countries, but to all CEE countries.

> The experiences in Central and Eastern Europe demonstrate the importance of targeting the right stakeholder groups for capacity-building efforts, including high-level officials in charge of government bodies responsible biosfety

Experiences gained and lessons learned during the BCH project were reflected in the improvement of training materials. They are also crucial in making recommendations regarding information-sharing obligations under the Protocol in the CEE region. Those experiences and lessons learned shall be especially useful in the planning and implementation of the second phase of the BCH Project recommended by COP-MOP 4.

A number of CEE countries have several CNAs responsible for different parts of a national biosafety system. Therefore, good communication and information flow are essential. There were also cases of changes in the responsibilities of different ministries and governmental bodies. This sometimes created additional obstacles to the normal functioning of the biosafety system. The experiences of countries that managed to establish and maintain efficient communication and information exchange between their CNAs were extremely useful for other CEE countries and workshop participants. This was the case, for example, regarding Moldova's experiences at the Cairo workshops.

In some cases the low number of officials involved in national biosafety systems, coupled with the transfer of trained officials from government to the private sector, posed considerable obstacles to the long-term sustainability of the national biosafety systems. This human-resource problem likely accounts for the fact that a significant number of countries did not fulfill their information-sharing obligations within the time frames set by the Protocol. In addition, some countries had a procedure that required a high-ranking official, other than the national BCH Focal Point, to approve publication of all BCH records. These experiences demonstrate the importance of targeting the right stakeholder groups for future capacity-building efforts, including high-level officials in charge of government bodies responsible for biosafety.

While information-sharing obligations were mostly met in CEE countries, there is still a need to further develop awareness of the full benefits of the BCH. For example, potential BCH users need to be made aware of benefits such as access to information about existing biosafety resources, capacity building opportunities, country needs and priorities, and training tools and materials available in the BCH. It should be further brought to the attention of stakeholders, in the second phase of the BCH project, that a wealth of information on important biosafety topics and other related issues is available through the BCH's online conferences.

The preferred working languages for the BCH project in the CEE region were English, Russian (in most of the republics of the former Soviet Union) as well as Bosnian, Serbian and Croatian (in most of the West Balkan countries). This required translating the most important material to these languages to further facilitate information-sharing through regional cooperation and assistance.

In the second phase of the BCH project, it is recommended that special emphasis be put on stakeholders identified in the first phase of the project as requiring additional capacity-building. The project should also identify the most appropriate training methods and further develop training tools and materials in the languages commonly used in the region.

Furthermore, exchange of experiences at the regional and sub-regional level should be encouraged. This would facilitate the operationalization of the countries' access to the BCH and foster effective participation of key stakeholders. In the case of CEE countries, the stakeholders should include experts from the region, EU experts and regional advisors. The experience gained by participating stakeholders during the first phase of the BCH project makes their role in the development of new tools and the facilitation of technical and theoretical collaboration between countries in the CEE region very valuable.

Photo Photo courtesy of Goran **Aničić**, www.flickr.com/photos/gorananicic/ (Watherfall at Gostilje / Zlatibor - Serbia)

Experiencias y lecciones aprendidas del BCH en el Perú

EXPERIENCIAS Y LECCIONES APRENDIDAS DE UN EXPERTO PERUANO

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Si bien el Perú tiene su ley de bioseguridad proclamada el 12 de mayo, 1999 (Ley 27104) y en efecto desde el 28 de enero de 2003, por Decreto Supremo 108-2002-PCM actualmente no se pone en práctica debido a que Reglamentos Sectoriales Internos deben ser aprobados por tres Autoridades Nacionales Competentes.

El proyecto UNEP-GEF/MNB-PERÚ permitió consolidar el compromiso de las autoridades nacionales competentes en la sostenibilidad del BCH Nacional

Fue el Proyecto UNEP-GEF sobre Desarrollo de marcos nacionales de bioseguridad - Perú (MNB-PERÚ) que facilitó que el Perú sea Parte del Protocolo de Cartagena de Bioseguridad desde el 13 de Julio del 2004 y en el que se diseño el Centro de Intercambio de Seguridad de la Biotecnología Nacional (BCHn) y su interoperabilidad con el BCH Portal Central.(BCH).

Con el Proyecto UNEP-GEF sobre Creación de capacidad para la participación efectiva en el Centro de Intercambio de Seguridad de la Biotecnología-Perú, el Ministerio del Ambiente, creado recientemente el 25 de agosto de 2008, lanzó oficialmente el BCHn interoperable con el BCH Central.

El proceso de implementación del BCH permitió consolidar y mantener en contacto un mínimo de personal asignado en las tres Autoridades Nacionales Competentes en Bioseguridad y algunos socios, con el Punto Focal Nacional del BCH.

Durante la implementación del BCH se realizaron talleres en Lima y tres otras áreas del Perú con importancia académico-científica y económica. Estos talleres permitieron informar sobre el MNB-PERÚ, para presentar el Protocolo de Cartagena, el BCH Central, Nacional de BCH, y para la creación de capacidad en la importancia de promover la utilización del BCH. Alrededor de 350 personas participaron, incluyendo el personal de las autoridades nacionales competentes y sectores de distintas partes interesadas. Como parte de la creación de capacidades y con el propósito de ser presentados en estos talleres, fué necesario preparar estudios de casos específicos sobre temas de interés nacional, que incluyeran directrices sobre el uso del BCH. Una de las preocupaciones sobre la Central del BCH era que el portal central era demasiado técnico y no atractivo para los medios de prensa y público en general. Estos talleres se reconocieron como una herramienta muy importante para la aplicación del Protocolo de Cartagena sobre Seguridad de la Biotecnología en el Perú.

En la actualidad contamos con personal en las tres Autoridades Nacionales Competentes capaces de replicar la formación en el BCH. El proyecto permitió consolidar el compromiso de las autoridades nacionales competentes en la sostenibilidad del BCH Nacional (personal, oficinas, apoyo de tecnología de la información, mantenimiento preventivo y correctivo y el presupuesto mínimo para llevar a cabo las tareas relacionadas con el BCH Nacional y Central.

Al presente, con nuevas autoridades en el Ministerio del Ambiente, Punto Focal del Protocolo de Cartagena sobre Seguridad de la Biotecnología y del BCH, el BCH Nacional (http://pe.biosafetyclearinghouse.net/) está cumpliendo sus objetivos, difundiendo información nacional sobre bioseguridad, la implementación del Protocolo de Cartagena y las actividades de sus tres Autoridades Nacionales Competentes.

Con la redistribución del BCH Current Awareness Service yo promuevo el uso del BCH mediante un grupo pequeño (30 personas) pero muy involucrado en bioseguridad. Esperamos que con la implementación del NBF-PERU, a través del Proyecto UNEP-GEF que está preparando el Ministerio del Ambiente y el Proyecto Regional LAC-Biosafety que coordina en el Perú el Instituto de Biotecnología de la Universidad Nacional Agraria La Molina, se contribuya coordinadamente a la consolidación del funcionamiento, sostenibilidad y uso nacional del BCH Nacional y Central.

> El BCH Nacional está cumpliendo sus objetivos, difundiendo información nacional sobre bioseguridad, la implementación del Protocolo de Cartagena y las actividades de sus tres Autoridades Nacionales Competentes

La necesidad de usar y acceder a información del BCHn y Central se verá muy pronto incrementada en el Perú por la inminente aprobación de los Reglamentos Internos Sectoriales de Bioseguridad cuyo borrador quedó listo en Octubre 2005 cuando se terminó el Proyecto UNEP-GEF/NBF-PERU. Las actividades de comercio e investigación científica con OVMs empezarán oficialmente y lo desarrollado e implementado al presente sobre el BCH empezará a dar sus frutos.

Considerando el ritmo lento con el que la bioseguridad y el Protocolo de Cartagena sobre Bioseguridad se implementa en los países en vías de desarrollo en contraste con el avance de las áreas cultivadas con transgénicos a nivel mundial, seria muy importante, como se solicitó en las conclusiones del proyecto UNEP-GEF y en la COP-MOP 4, que éste proyecto continuara para asegurar la sostenibilidad de lo logrado, a través de fondos disponibles, en particular para talleres nacionales.

Foto por cortesía de Ralf Bach , www.flickr.com/photos/30957604@N06/ (Peru - Machu Picchu)

Building Capacity for the BCH

EXPERIENCES AND LESSONS LEARNED FROM AN URUGUAYAN EXPERT

by **By Ernesto Ocampo Edye** ● Mr. Ernesto Ocampo Edye is is a Computer and Software Engineer and Regional Specialist for Latin America. He can be contacted at: ernesto@qualisyss.com

The Biosafety Clearing-House (BCH) Capacity-Building Project started 1 May, 2004. It was implemented by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) with funding from the Global Environment Facility (GEF). The project initially targeted 50 countries, with a time span of 36 months. Its main objective was to assist eligible countries to strengthen their national capacities to access and use the BCH, in order to implement their obligations under the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety. The main project goals were: (i) strengthening capacity by deploying training activities for key stakeholders, (ii) creating an environment to meet the obligations to implement the Protocol and (iii) further supporting capacity-building activities through the development and dissemination of an interactive computer-based training kit.

Due to its success after it was initiated, the project was extended to an additional 89 countries resulting in a total of 139 eligible countries. Out of these 109 actively participated in the project. The project duration was also been extended to 60 months.

The project aimed to satisfy identified country needs related to biosafety knowledge in general and the BCH in particular. Countries mostly requested for collaboration in (i) development of human resources and technical expertise, (ii) building and maintaining infrastructure, (iii) development of institutional synergies, and (iv) technical support for national systems to establish and operationalize the BCH.

At the outset of the project it was evident that in most participating countries there was little or no institutional knowledge regarding the content and, activities of the BCH and the obligations under the Protocol. Most government officers as well as the private sector participants who attended national and regional workshops were not even aware of the Protocol. The situation has changed dramatically with over time. Most participating countries have started to advance the establishment of their biosafety regulatory frameworks as a result of the UNEP-GEF project on the Development of National Biosafety Frameworks (NBFs). Also the BCH Project has enabled countries to realize and understand their obligations to provide information to the BCH. In all the participating countries (and in several non-participating countries) the BCH Project has actively helped to build knowledge and establish basic inter-institutional links that are critical for implementing a nation-wide biosafety regulatory system.

The initial target of the project was to train three people from each participating country through a series of regional workshops. However, based on consultations with many training experts and key individuals with experience in establishing national BCH components, it was decided to change the approach and develop a core group of thoroughly trained Regional Advisors (RAs) to deliver training and provide advice and assistance to countries during and after the completion of the project. The Regional Advisory system was created, and became fully operational in December 2005.

Many training sessions were organized and executed with the assistance of the RAs by the end of the project,. This included more than 400 national workshops and 17 regional/sub-regional workshops. Furthermore, 6 BCH global workshops were held as side-events back-to-back with the meetings of the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties (COP-MOP). Over 3,000 people from more than 120 countries were trained, including national BCH National Focal Points and country participants from government ministries, academic/research institutions and the private sector.

The RAs were selected through an extremely rigorous recruitment process. They were selected from the regions in which they were to serve in order to make countries comfortable with their services due to language compatibility, similar culture, work ethic and social/economic realities. Living and working in their respective regions, they represent a more sustainable source of advice for the countries.

The RA system has been supported by a combination of electronic networking among RAs, national BCH users, the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (SCBD) and the project team (e.g. workshop participation, sharing of stories and mission reports, periodic review meetings, etc.) There were two main tools used for this collaboration:

MOODLE: An electronic, virtual knowledge–sharing platform linked to the BCH database with training materials in different official UN languages. This was made available to countries so that they could use forums to share experiences and enhance online real-time communication.

ANUBIS: an on-line knowledge and project management system accessible by the project team and RAs from everywhere in the world. As the RAs and the project teams were globally distributed, in almost every workshop the RAs were able to receive real-time support from the team. Regional coordinators were also able to address the participants from the national workshops electronically.

Owing to their strong relationship with the RAs, the BCH technical team in Montreal was able to electronically answer questions from participants and immediately solve issues in countries undergoing BCH national workshops.

Usually each national workshop was jointly organised by national officers, one or two RAs and the respective regional coordinators. This preparation was done well in advance and made use of the electronic tools, training materials and communication channels. Fine-tuned logistical support made all of these global activities possible.

Another important contribution of this project was the advice given to countries regarding the options for national participation in the BCH, which were made available by the CBD Secretariat. Before the project started many countries lacked full knowledge about these options, which led to delays in their implementation. The RAs and the project team helped countries to assess their capabilities, real needs and requirements related to registering and accessing information in the BCH information. This enabled them to make cost-benefit analyses and make informed decisions regarding the most feasible options. Many countries opted for the HERMES and AJAX tools, which enable them to develop and sustain their national BCH websites with very few resources. Large amounts of national resources were saved and countries were much better able to participate in the BCH. Furthermore, the project developed a complete set of training materials comprising more than 150,000 words which were made available in 5 UN languages (Arabic, English, French, Spanish and Russian). These materials were extensively reviewed and approved by a vast network of biotechnology, legal and information technology (IT) specialists, including the BCH team at the SCBD. The training materials were made available to all countries through the RAs and the project knowledge-sharing platform, MOODLE. The training package was updated continuously, in creative ways, as experience of the project grew. Currently, it includes many resources targeted to a large number of key stakeholders and potential participants in BCH training workshops. Different combinations of this extensive resource have been used in national, regional and global BCH workshops. At the end of the project, all the training materials were migrated to the BCH Central Portal. An on-line context–sensitive help system for the BCH Central Portal was also developed based on them.

The development, translation, review, management and publishing of the above training kit required enormous coordinated effort. The whole process itself provided many lessons learned for others who plan to undertake similar multilingual, worldwide distributed knowledge management initiatives. It involved several dozen highly skilled people worldwide, led by the project team and in continuous collaboration of the BCH team at the SCBD. More than 15 RAs in projects participated in reviewing the different language translations and external consultants helped develop content. Several companies worked on translations and others worked on the creation and updating of software modules. It was therefore crucial to set up complete project management and version control systems to manage the complexity of such an extensive set of training materials. Because these processes have been fully documented in accordance with state-of-the-art practices, they will remain a resource for similar future efforts.

Through 17 regional workshops and 6 global workshops, several opportunities existed for countries and RAs to share their experiences. This effectively enabled those countries that were further advanced in project implementation and use of the BCH to guide other participating countries.

> The BCH Project has enabled countries to realize and understand their obligations to provide information to the BCH

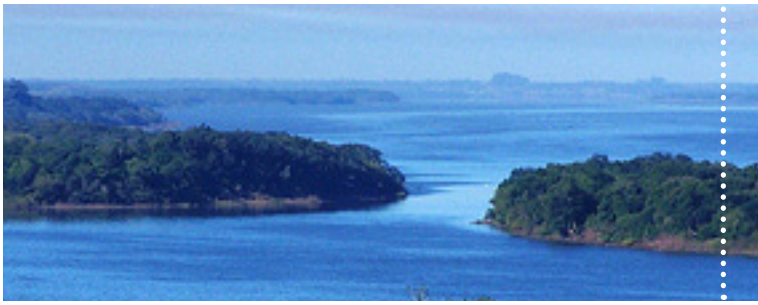


Photo courtesy of *Ely*, www.flickr.com/photos/32197626@N03/ (Rio Uruguay y campo en Paysandù)

During the last months of the project, and particularly at COP-MOP 4 in Bonn, Germany, several participating countries expressed strong support for the continuation of the project in order to sustain and develop further BCH training activities. The next phase of the project would involve:

- More focused training of the BCH end-users and stakeholders, including civil society, industry (e.g. traders in GM commodities), academia, researchers, regulatory agencies, politicians and the media. Productive sectors have proven to be very important drivers for the information on biosafety to be made promptly available. This stimulus thus promotes compliance with the Protocol and, accordingly, the entry of national information into the BCH.
- Collaboration with academic institutions, especially universities and research institutes with curricula in biosafety-related fields in order to effectively help to build capacity and sustainability of training activities.
- Continued development of training materials, targeting specific key stakeholders, and wide promotion of their global use.
- Continuation and expansion of the Regional Advisors System and the supporting electronic and management tools. This would help RAs deploy their advisory services and keep up-to-date on the latest advances in BCH and biosafety issues, in order to better assist the countries to develop their own national BCH nodes and training activities.

We enthusiastically look forward to be able to continue serving the countries to build a safer and greener world.

SECTION II /

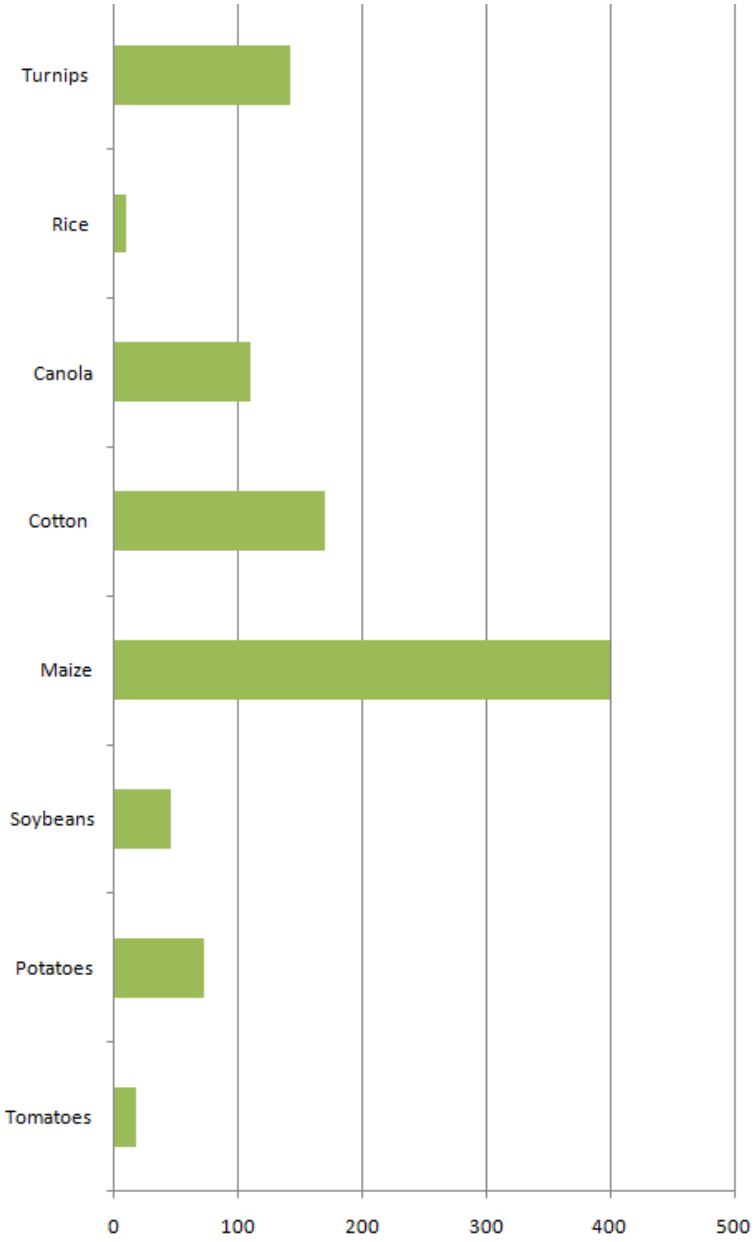
UPDATES

- Statistics
- Useful Information
- BCH News
- Recent and Upcoming Biosafety Meetings

Photo courtesy of www.flickr.com/photos/teleglys/

Statistics

Total Number of Decisions on Living Modified Organisms (LMOs) Submitted to the BCH - Food, Feed, Processing (FFPs)



HTTP://BCH.CBD.INT/DATABASE/DECISIONS/

Useful Information

The COP-MOP 5 Website Launched

www.cbd.int/mop5/

SUMMARY OF KEY EXPECTED OUTCOMES FROM THE COP-MOP 5

Handling, transport, packaging and identification of LMOs

At this meeting, the Parties will consider a synthesis report on experience gained with the use of documentation to further harmonization of a documentation format to fulfil specific identification requirements, including consideration of the need for a stand-alone document. COP-MOP 5 is also expected to review a document on experiences of international bodies in the establishment and implementation of rules and standards relevant to Article 18. Furthermore, it is also expected that a summary of the outcome reflecting the full range of views expressed of the Online Forum on Standards for LMO Shipments will be reviewed.

Risk assessment and risk management

At its fourth meeting, the COP-MOP, established and mandated an Ad Hoc Technical Expert Group (AHTEG) on Risk Assessment and Risk Management to, among other things, prepare a "roadmap", e.g. a flowchart, on steps for conducting a risk assessment in accordance with Annex III to the Protocol with examples of existing guidance documents for each of step. The COP-MOP 5 is expected to consider a report from the expert group and to take appropriate action.

Liability and redress

At its first meeting, the COP-MOP established an Ad Hoc Open Ended Working Group of Legal and Technical Experts on Liability and Redress to elaborate options for elements of international rules and procedures on liability and redress under the Protocol. The Working Group was requested to complete its work in 2007. At its fourth meeting, COP-MOP considered the final report of the Working Group and adopted the negotiating text as revised by a contact group. At its fourth meeting, the COP-MOP agreed to establish a Group of the Friends of the Co-Chairs to continue the process. It is expected that the fifth meeting of the COP-MOP will consider the outcome of the negotiations of the Group and take appropriate action.

Assessment and review

The COP-MOP 5 is expected to review and adopt a draft strategic plan for the Protocol. It is also expected to review a document on, among other things, sound methodological approach to contribute to an effective second assessment and review of the Protocol and draft criteria or indicators that could apply in the evaluation of the effectiveness of the Protocol and provide an indication of the utility.

Public awareness and participation

Under this meeting, it is expected that Parties will adopt a comprehensive programme of work on public awareness, education and participation concerning the safe transfer, handling and use of LMOs. The meeting will also consider a synthesis of views submitted on possible elements of a programme of work. Furthermore, COP-MOP 5 will consider a report on progress and initiatives made by governments and organizations in promoting public awareness, education and participation concerning the safe transfer, handling and use of LMOs, including experiences gained and lessons learned from the national biosafety frameworks and taking into account information contained in the Biosafety Clearing-House.

SCBD Conference Room in Memory of Mrs. Fee Chon Chong Low

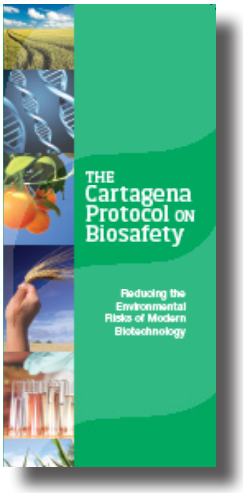
Gurdial Singh, Head of Malaysian Delegation, saying a few words in memory of Mrs. Fee Chon Chong Low

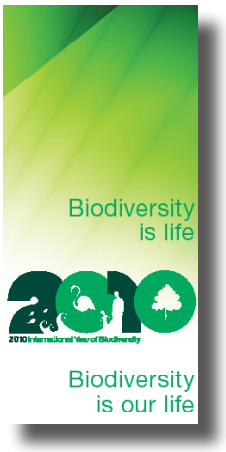
On 13 November, the Secretariat dedicated one of its conference rooms in memory of Mrs. Fee Chon Chong Low, for her invaluable contribution to UNEP.

COP-MOP Bureau Meeting

2010 International Year of Biological Diversity (IYB)

Resources for celebrations - Brochures, Logos and posters





www.cbd.int/2010/resources/

www.cbd.int/doc/reports/cbd-report-2009-en.pdf

Year in Review 2009

www.cbd.int/programmes/outreach/awareness/publications.shtml?grp=cpb

BCH News

The Secretariat continued to revamp the BCH to improve access and retrieval of biosafety information. During this year new common formats, a new Roster of Biosafety Experts and online discussion fora and real-time conferences were developed.

6 new common formats for the registration of records in the BCH and a new BCH Management Centre were developed.

Offline format
(Step 1: Gathering Information)

Online format
(Step 2: Submitting Information)

The Secretariat also introduced a new procedure for validation of information submitted to the BCH. The new procedure establishes a timeframe for the confirmation or updating of certain categories of information was also introduced. Furthermore, translation of the Management Centre (http://bch.cbd.int/managementcentre/) into all the United Nations official languages is currently underway.

In 2009, a new tutorial on the use of the BCH to facilitate the use of the new common formats for the submission of information to the BCH was developed. The tutorial is composed of five modules that provide guidance on the basic features of the different BCH sections. They are currently available in English, French and Spanish.

AVI WMV PPT
http://bch.cbd.int/help/tutorial.shtml

The new Roster of Biosafety Experts was developed and available through the BCH at: https://bch.cbd.int/database/experts/. By 12 December 2009, 75 experts had been nominated to the Roster by Parties or other Governments.

FUN FACTS:

7711 records in the scientific biblographic database
1001 records in the biosafety information resource center (BIRC)
1153 decisions in the country's decisions and other communications
617 records of laws and regulations
365 records in the capacity-building databases
209 records of organizations related to biosafety
75 Roster of experts

Mailing list

https://bch.cbd.int/resources/mailinglist.shtml

The Cartagena Protocol requires all Parties to inform their public on how to access the BCH.

Recent and Upcoming Biosafety Meetings

Compliance Committee

The sixth meeting of the Compliance Committee under the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety took place in Montreal, from 4 to 6 November 2009. The Committee continued with the discussions from its previous meetings regarding the Parties' fulfilment of their national reporting obligations. The Committee reviewed a number of scenarios which might have hindered the fulfilment of reporting obligation under the Biosafety Protocol and discussed measures for improvement. Furthermore, the Committee reviewed general issues of compliance as regards the obligation to provide information to the Biosafety Clearing-House and agreed to some preliminary recommendations, which will be further reviewed at its next meeting. The Committee also decided not to consider a complaint submitted to it by a non-governmental organization alleging non-compliance of a Party with its obligations under the Protocol because the matter falls outside the scope of section IV of the compliance procedures provided for in the annex to decision BS-I/7. The Committee elected a new chairperson and vice chairperson who would serve for the next two-year term.

The Opening of the Compliance Committee in Montreal (Photo by Mateusz Banski)

Newly Appointed Chair of the Compliance Committee (Photo by Mateusz Banski)

Risk Assessment and Risk Management

During the months of June-July, a new series of discussion groups of the Open-ended Online Expert Forum on Risk Assessment and Risk Management were launched with the objective of assisting the AHTEG Sub-working Groups in the development of guidance documents on the following four topics as assigned to the four Sub-working Groups of the AHTEG: i) Roadmap for Risk Assessment, ii) guidance document on Living Modified Crops with Resistance or Tolerance to Abiotic Stress, iii) guidance document on Living Modified Mosquitoes and iv) guidance document on Living Modified Organisms with Stacked Genes or Traits. The AHTEG sub-working Group on the Roadmap for Risk Assessment met from 12 to 14 October in The Hague, The Netherlands, and produced a new advance draft of the Roadmap and further agreed on a process for testing the Roadmap prior to the AHTEG meeting in April 2010. During the period 23 November to 14 December 2009, a series of online Discussion Groups were held under the Open-ended Online Expert Forum on Risk Assessment and Risk Management for further input to the work of the AHTEG, including further drafting of the four guidance documents being prepared by the Group. The participants to the Open-ended Forum also had the opportunity to discuss the way forward for the development of further guidance on Risk Assessment and Risk Management of LMOs. A total of 151 experts, nominated by Parties, 11 by non-Parties and 60 Observers to take part in the Forum.

http://bch.cbd.int/onlineconferences/forum_RA.shtml

Journalists attending the Journalist Dialogue Workshop in Montreal - The Biosafety Protocol was presented (Photo by Mateusz Banski)

Biosafety Clearing-House

The fifth meeting of the Informal Advisory Committee of the Biosafety Clearing-House (BCH-IAC) was held in Montreal on 19 -21 October 2009. In accordance with decisions made by the Parties, the BCH-IAC meets annually to provide guidance to the Secretariat with respect to the resolution of technical issues associated with the ongoing development of the BCH. This meeting was attended by experts selected from Belize, China, the European Community, Liberia, Madagascar, Peru, Serbia, Slovenia, Tajikistan and Uruguay and representatives from the U.S. Department of State, CBD Alliance, Global Industry Coalition (GIC) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) also participated. The agenda of the meeting addressed the following issues: (i) Recent changes in the BCH; (ii) BCH forum, activities and tools; (iii) Online Tools for Statistical Analysis and Graphic Representations of Data; (iv) Study of users and potential users of the BCH; (v) Draft Strategic Plan of the Cartagena Protocol focusing on the BCH component; (vi) Future developments and challenges; and (vii) Status of the UNEP-GEF BCH project extension. The participants congratulated the Secretariat for the progress achieved and the quality of the improvements made and provided very helpful recommendations on all of the issues that were discussed.

Fifth BCH-IAC meeting in Montreal (Photo by Mateusz Banski)

2nd International Youth Symposium - The Protocol on Biosafety was presented

Handling, Transport, Packaging and Identification

The Secretariat organised two of the series of Regional Training of Trainers' Workshops on the Identification and Documentation of Living Modified Organisms (LMOs) under the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety for the Africa region in Bamako, Mali, from 14 to 18 September 2009 and Latin American and the Caribbean region, in Mexico City, Mexico, from 23 to 27 November 2009.

The Africa region workshop was hosted by the Government of Mali with the financial contribution from the European Commission and with support for some participants being provided by the Union Economique et Monétaire Ouest Africaine. The workshop was attended by more than 36 participants including 22 countries and 6 representatives from organizations involved in the identification and documentation of living modified organisms.

The Latin American and the Caribbean Region workshop was hosted by the Government of Mexico through the National Autonomous University of Mexico, in collaboration with the Inter American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA). The financial support for developing country participants was provided by the Government of Spain. Thirty-four participants from 19 countries and 5 organizations attended.

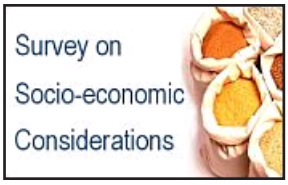
The workshops were aimed at introducing customs officers to (i) the requirements of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety regarding the identification and documentation of LMOs; and (ii) techniques and methodologies that may be used for the implementation of these requirements. To this end, participants discussed the role of customs officials in implementing the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety, documentation accompanying shipments of living modified organisms, sampling and detection of living modified organisms and experiences of the Green Customs Initiative partners. One of the major outputs of the workshops was the development of action plans for the implementation of the identification and documentation requirements for LMOs by country participants. The workshops had practical laboratory sessions on LMO identification at which participants were introduced to the use of lateral flow strip tests, ELISA tests as well as qualitative and real-time quantitative PRC (polymerase chain reaction) machines.

Participants at the Mexico workshop (Photo by kathryn Garforth)

Socio-Economic Considerations

Pursuant to decision BS-II/12 and BS-IV/16, the Secretariat in collaboration with the Division of GEF Coordination of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) conducted an online Survey on the Application of and Experience in the Use of Socio-Economic Considerations in Decision-Making on Living Modified Organisms between 14 October and 13 November 2009. The survey, which contained 46 questions, was developed by a panel of experts with funding from the Department for International Development of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. The survey was available in English, French and Spanish and was open to anyone although pre-registration was required. A total of over 500 completed responses were received. A final report on the survey will be issued in early 2010. The results are expected to feed into relevant processes under the Protocol including the sixth Coordination Meeting for Governments and Organizations Implementing or Funding Biosafety Capacity-building Activities scheduled to take place 1 to 3 February 2010 in Siem Reap, Cambodia.

http://bch.cbd.int/onlineconferences/socioeconomics.shtml



Cooperation with other organizations, conventions and initiatives

The Secretariat participated in the fourth Meeting of the Biosafety National Project Coordinators in Chisinau, Moldova, 1 – 4 December 2009. Topics such as mainstreaming of biosafety into national policies; information management and sharing and the BCH; challenges to meeting Cartagena Protocol obligations, among others, were discussed.

Participants at the Moldova meeting (Photo by David Duthie)

Participants at the Mali workshop (Photo by Kathryn Garforth)

Upcoming Meetings

1 - 3 February 2010
Siem Reap, Cambodia
Sixth Coordination Meeting for Governments and Organizations Implementing or Funding Biosafety Capacity-building Activities

2 February 2010
Second Series of Regional Real-time Online Conferences on Risk Assessment and Risk Management: Africa

4 February 2010
Second Series of Regional Real-time Online Conferences on Risk Assessment and Risk Management: Asia and the Pacific

4 - 5 February 2010
Siem Reap, Cambodia
Seventh Meeting of the Liaison Group on Capacity-building for Biosafety

8 - 12 February 2010
Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
Second meeting of the Group of the Friends of the Co-Chairs on Liability and Redress in the context of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety

9 February 2010
Second Series of Regional Real-time Online Conferences on Risk Assessment and Risk Management: WEOG and CEE

11 February 2010
Second Series of Regional Real-time Online Conferences on Risk Assessment and Risk Management: Latin America and the Caribbean

15 - 17 February 2010
Tsukuba, Japan
Third International Meeting of Academic Institutions and other Organizations involved in Biosafety Education and Training

19 - 23 April 2010
Ljubljana, Slovenia
Second Meeting of the Ad hoc Technical Expert Group on Risk Assessment and Risk Management

11 - 15 October 2010
Nagoya, Aichi Prefecture, Japan
Fifth meeting of the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety (COP-MOP 5)

Country's Decisions on Imports of Living Modified Organisms are Available in the Biosafety Clearing-House. An example is the Living Modified Carnation.

Photos courtesy of *Melody Shanahan-Kluth*, www.flickr.com/photos/melodysk/

2010 International Year of Biodiversity