



منظمة الأغذية  
والزراعة  
للأمم المتحدة

联合国  
粮食及  
农业组织

Food  
and  
Agriculture  
Organization  
of  
the  
United  
Nations

Organisation  
des  
Nations  
Unies  
pour  
l'alimentation  
et  
l'agriculture

Продовольственная и  
сельскохозяйственная  
организация  
Объединенных  
Наций

Organización  
de las  
Naciones  
Unidas  
para la  
Agricultura  
y la  
Alimentación

## COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE

### Twenty-second Session

Rome, 16 – 19 June 2010

## FAO INTERNATIONAL TECHNICAL CONFERENCE ON AGRICULTURAL BIOTECHNOLOGIES IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES: OPTIONS AND OPPORTUNITIES IN CROPS, FORESTRY, LIVESTOCK, FISHERIES AND AGRO-INDUSTRY TO FACE THE CHALLENGES OF FOOD INSECURITY AND CLIMATE CHANGE (ABDC-10)

1. The FAO International Technical Conference on Agricultural Biotechnologies in Developing Countries (ABDC-10) took place in Guadalajara, Mexico from 1 to 4 March 2010. A major objective of the Conference was to take stock of the application of biotechnologies across the different food and agricultural sectors in developing countries, in order to learn from the past and to identify options for the future to face the challenges of food insecurity, climate change and natural resource degradation.
2. ABDC-10 was hosted by the Government of Mexico and co-sponsored by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD). The Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR), the Global Forum on Agricultural Research (GFAR), the International Centre for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology (ICGEB) and the World Bank were major partners in this initiative.
3. The Conference was dedicated to “agricultural biotechnologies”, a term covering a broad range of biotechnologies used in food and agriculture for a variety of different purposes such as the improvement of plant varieties and animal populations to increase their yields or efficiency; characterization and conservation of genetic resources; plant or animal disease diagnosis; vaccine development; and improvement of feeds and the safety of foods. The Conference had a cross-sectoral approach, including the production and processing of crop, livestock, fish and forestry products.
4. The Conference brought together about 300 policy-makers, scientists and representatives of intergovernmental and international non-governmental organizations. This included delegations from 42 FAO member countries. Plenary sessions were dedicated to issues such as

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how to target agricultural biotechnologies to the poor; how to enable research and development (R&D) in agricultural biotechnologies; and how to ensure that the benefits of R&D are accessible in developing countries.

5. Both the build-up and organization of the Conference were hallmarked by a highly participatory approach. An international Steering Committee was established, chaired by Professor M.S. Swaminathan from India. The Committee included individuals invited in their personal capacity, selected on the basis of their scientific expertise in one or more areas of agricultural biotechnologies, as well as those representing relevant stakeholder groups, including United Nations (UN) and non-UN intergovernmental organizations, civil society organizations, private foundations and private sector organizations. An extensive series of FAO technical documents<sup>1</sup> were prepared for the Conference.

6. As part of the build-up to ABDC-10, FAO hosted a moderated e-mail conference<sup>2</sup> entitled "Learning from the past: Successes and failures with agricultural biotechnologies in developing countries over the last 20 years". Over 800 persons subscribed and most of the messages posted came from people living in developing countries, describing and analyzing their experiences of the use of agricultural biotechnologies in their respective countries. Several of the experiences described were incorporated into the FAO documents for ABDC-10.

7. Different stakeholders, including intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations and regional fora, organized parallel sessions<sup>3</sup> at the Conference. These included the CGIAR, ICGEB, the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the UN Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), Oxfam International, the Association of Agricultural Research Institutions in the Near East and North Africa (AARINENA), the Asia-Pacific Association of Agricultural Research Institutions (APAARI) and the Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA). In addition, 22 different organizations, including international and national research institutions, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, participated in the "Knowledge Share Fair"<sup>4</sup> to promote good knowledge sharing practices in the field of agricultural biotechnologies.

8. The Conference reached a number of key conclusions, as reflected in the Conference report<sup>5</sup>:

*"The International Technical Conference acknowledged that:*

- a) *Agricultural biotechnologies<sup>6</sup> encompass a wide-range of tools and methodologies that are being applied to an increasing extent in crops, livestock, forestry, fisheries and aquaculture, and agro-industries, to help alleviate hunger and poverty, assist in adaptation to climate change and maintain the natural resource base, in both developing and developed countries.*
- b) *The various applications of agricultural biotechnologies have not been widely used in many developing countries, and have not sufficiently benefited smallholder farmers and producers and consumers.*

<sup>1</sup> Available at [www.fao.org/biotech/abdc/backdocs](http://www.fao.org/biotech/abdc/backdocs)

<sup>2</sup> [www.fao.org/biotech/conf16.htm](http://www.fao.org/biotech/conf16.htm)

<sup>3</sup> Summary reports of the parallel sessions are available at <http://www.fao.org/biotech/abdc/parallel/en/>

<sup>4</sup> [www.fao.org/fileadmin/templates/abdc/documents/fair.pdf](http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/templates/abdc/documents/fair.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> ABDC-10/REPORT, at [www.fao.org/biotech/abdc/backdocs](http://www.fao.org/biotech/abdc/backdocs)

<sup>6</sup> The definition is broad and is based on that of the Convention on Biological Diversity, which states that biotechnology is "any technological application that uses biological systems, living organisms, or derivatives thereof, to make or modify products or processes for specific use". The specific kinds of biotechnologies encompassed by the term 'agricultural biotechnologies' are described in the sector-specific documents ABDC-10/3.1 to ABDC-10/7.1.

- c) *More research and development of agricultural biotechnologies should be focused on the needs of smallholder farmers and producers.*
- d) *Governments need to develop their own national vision and policy for the role of biotechnologies, with options and opportunities examined within the context of national economic, social and rural sustainable development and environmental strategies, objectives and programmes.*
- e) *Effective communication and participation strategies are necessary to encourage and promote public involvement and empowerment in decision-making processes, regarding the development and use of biotechnologies.*
- f) *Stronger partnerships among and within countries will facilitate the development and use of biotechnologies, including south-south and regional alliances; incorporation of traditional knowledge; and public-private and research partnerships for sharing experiences, information and technologies.*

*The International Technical Conference agreed that:*

- a) *Developing countries should significantly increase sustained investments in capacity building and development and safe use of biotechnologies integrated with other agricultural technologies, including traditional knowledge, and maintain the natural resource base to support in particular, smallholders, producers and small biotechnology based enterprise, employing effective participatory approaches for the robust input from stakeholders in decision-making processes.*
- b) *FAO and other relevant international organizations and donors should significantly increase their efforts to support the strengthening of national capacities in the development and appropriate use of pro-poor agricultural biotechnologies, and that they be directed to the needs of smallholders, consumers, producers and small biotechnology based enterprises in developing countries.*
- c) *Both the lack of policies and regulatory mechanisms as well as overly stringent regulations hinder development of, and access to biotechnologies. Effective and enabling national biotechnology policies and science-based regulatory frameworks can facilitate the development and appropriate use of biotechnologies in developing countries; and ongoing reviews, improvement and harmonization of existing biotechnology policies and regulatory frameworks and keep them current and rational.”*