

## **Biosafety in the broader context of biosecurity: Summary report of the ABDC-10 parallel session<sup>1</sup>**

Facilitator: Ruth Frampton and Masami Takeuchi, Rapporteur: Sridhar Dharmapuri. 40 participants

“Biosafety in the broader context of biosecurity” generally refers to the safe use of new biotechnologies with management of biological risks associated with food and agriculture. The term “biosecurity” has been used by FAO to describe a strategic and integrated approach that encompasses the policy and regulatory frameworks for analyzing and managing relevant risks to human, animal and plant life and health, and associated risks to the environment. The value of the approach was recognized in the session.

In response to the introductory presentation, some participants suggested that the term “biosecurity” could be improved upon, given that currently “biosecurity” means different things in specific country contexts. FAO case studies indicated how this integrated approach may be used to rationalize decision-making around risk analysis. The benefit of identifying coordination mechanisms, yet using the existing institutional arrangements in the countries and the regions was highlighted. It was stressed that the approach should not add another layer to the national structures.

It was highlighted in one of the presentations that various biotechnologies being used in developed countries have potential to provide useful tools, such as pest/disease diagnosis and traceability tools in the implementation of risk management. At the same time, development and the use of some of the tools would require food and/or environmental safety assessments.

Examples of international efforts on biosafety were introduced by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD): one on environmental safety and one on food safety. Multilateral initiatives led by Mexico and Brazil to develop consensus documents were presented. OECD consensus documents are voluntary and risk-oriented guidance documents and are used by many countries and many sectors. The relationship, similarities and differences of OECD consensus documents and Codex texts were also discussed.

The various uses of the capacity building needs assessment tool in identifying gaps, avoiding inconsistencies and prioritizing actions were presented. It was particularly useful for cross-cutting capacity building since cost effectiveness and usefulness of focused intervention were demonstrated through two case studies. Issues around biotechnology are cross-cutting and often require a multidisciplinary integrated approach.

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<sup>1</sup> This is the summary report of the parallel session organized by the FAO Nutrition and Consumer Protection Division on the third day of the FAO international technical conference on Agricultural Biotechnologies in Developing Countries (ABDC-10) that took place in Guadalajara, Mexico on 1-4 March 2010 (<http://www.fao.org/biotech/abdc/parallel/en>). An Issue paper was also prepared for this session - see ABDC-10/Biosecurity at <http://www.fao.org/biotech/abdc/backdocs/en/>