

Biosafety regulations and perspectives at the Latin America and the Caribbean Region: Status, needs and actions

FAO International technical conference

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 (*ABDC10*)

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History

- Workshop: “Biosafety Harmonization in the South Cone: Oversight of Transgenic Plants”, IICA, ISAAA. Buenos Aires, Argentina, 1992
- ... (Several meetings)
- Two year Project FAO TCP/RLA/3109: “Development of reference technical tools for Biosafety Management in Extended Mercosur Countries”. Started Jan. 2008, ongoing. Under the umbrella of *REDBIO/FAO and Fundación Redbio Internacional*. (www.redbio.org)

Current Status

- Country-specific environmental effects:
 - Biological diversity differences, mega-diverse countries
 - Agro-ecosystem / ecosystem balance
- Import/export status on commodity trade
- Coexistence relevance, traceability structure
- Status (Party/non-Party) with regard to the Cartagena Protocol
- NGO's activities

Why Harmonization? (I)

- To facilitate intra- and extra- regional trade
 - Avoiding asynchronous approvals
 - Allowing trade according to intended use
- To integrate regionally the adoption of the new technologies
 - Orphan crops of regional interest
 - Test and grow GM crops across boundaries

Why Harmonization? (II)

- Three countries in the region (Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay): ~ 40% world area with GM crops, major exporters
- Some strong R&D programs in agriculture biotechnology in the region (linking regulations with innovation)
- To establish cooperation channels for research, regulations and policies

What to Harmonize?

- Regulations – Risk Assessment:
 - guidelines, basic criteria
 - Information requirements
 - Structure of regulatory process
- Risk management, needs and strategies
- Risk communication
- Positions at international forums
- Regional contribution to global challenges

Harmonization: Needs

- Development of common criteria
- Definition of common goals
- Concerted development of human resources
- Infrastructure (informatics, equipments, etc)
- Financial resources

Harmonization: Possible Actions

- Information sharing
 - Consultation on regulatory decisions
 - Biosafety information
- Joint projects (research, development of new GM crops, networking, the ongoing FAO/TCP Project)
- Coordinated capacity building
- Regional “clearinghouse”

Major Challenges

- Strengthening of regulatory expertise
- Updating of cutting-edge knowledge
- Cartagena Protocol:
 - Obligations
 - Impact on regulations
- Common regulatory process
- Region-specific problems

Paving the Road towards Harmonization

Biosafety regulation is a scientific activity

- Assets:
 - Human resources
 - High scientific level

- Goal: harmonized regulatory process

- Challenges:
 - Region-specific issues
 - Harmonizing non-scientific issues: socio-economic considerations, trade status and positions at international forums

Thank you