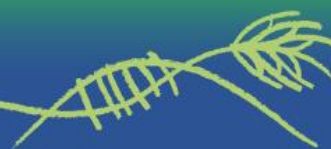


# FAO GM Foods Platform



November 2016

eNewsletter for the Platform community

<http://fao.org/gm-platform/>

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## Interview with a Focal Point: Philippines – Merle B. Palacpac

*“You have to be determined to face the resistance and keep moving ahead to establish a solid GM food safety assessment process for your country!”*

In order to facilitate Focal Points to learn from each other's experiences, FAO interviews Focal Points from various countries to share their national requirement, process and experience on GM food safety assessment. This article features an interview session with Merle B. Palacpac, the Focal Point for Philippines, who is a risk manager.

**Interviewer:** Can you please tell us about your background?



**Merle Palacpac (Merle):** I am the Chief of the National Plant Quarantine services (PQS) in the Bureau of Plant Industry of Philippines. I have been working with the government for 35 years. I graduated with a B.S in Biology and pursued my masters in Plant Pathology at the University of Philippines. I am one of the pioneers in setting up

the Biotechnology regulations and I serve as the alternate to the Director of the Bureau of Plant Industry (BPI) who is the representative to the Department of Scientific and Technical information of the Biosafety committee. I have been a regulator for 17 years and I am in charge of all the regulations concerned with GM plant products.

**Interviewer:** How and why were you chosen to be the Focal Point for Philippines?

**Merle:** Regulation of GMOs falls under the mandate of the PQS of the BPI. Since I am the chief of the PQS and as a vice-chair in the Biosafety core team, I was chosen to be the Focal Point for Philippines to the FAO GM Foods Platform.

**Interviewer:** As the Focal point and the Chief of the PQS, are you a risk manager, a risk communicator or a risk assessor?

**Merle:** I am a risk manager as I supervise the entire GM food safety assessment process and in charge of all the procedure and the work of the risk assessors.

**Interviewer:** Does Philippines have a guideline for GM Food safety assessment. If yes, are these in line with the Codex guideline for the conduct of food safety assessment of foods derived from recombinant DNA plants?

**Merle:** Yes, Philippines follows a guideline for the...[Click](#) to Continue Reading

As a risk manager, Merle provided information about the active role taken by her and the Biosafety committee in managing and regulating the GM food safety assessment by consulting various panels and ministries. Click [continue reading](#) to read the entire interview. There are various ways and approaches that can be taken to the relevant data collection process at national level, but for countries with limited experience, the real-life examples can be the best teacher. Thank you very much Merle for your time and valuable contribution to the Platform community!

### **Country Highlight: Vol.33: Cuba**

For this month, FAO selects Cuba (<http://tiny.cc/customurl-CUB>) and introduces its "Country Profile". The selection is done at random and there is no criterion for the selection. We strongly encourage all of you to review/update your Country Profile section on the FAO GM Foods Platform.

"Cuba is a part of Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety since 2002.

In this sense the national authority for this instrument is the National Center for Environmental Biosafety Ministry of Science, Technology and Environment created by Resolution No. 67, 1996. The mandate of this center includes among others, exercise control over the Living Modified Organism (LMO) in order to protect biodiversity and the environment in general. This authority works based on legislation headed by Law No. 190 of Biosafety of 1999, and complementary legislation includes a number of

technical regulations covering the contained use. As competent authority Biosafety, the center provides authorization for all activities involving LMOs both domestically produced and imported products that contain them. Resolution No. 180 of 2007, containing the decision making process regarding LMOs, which is carried out prior risk analysis process step by step, case by case.

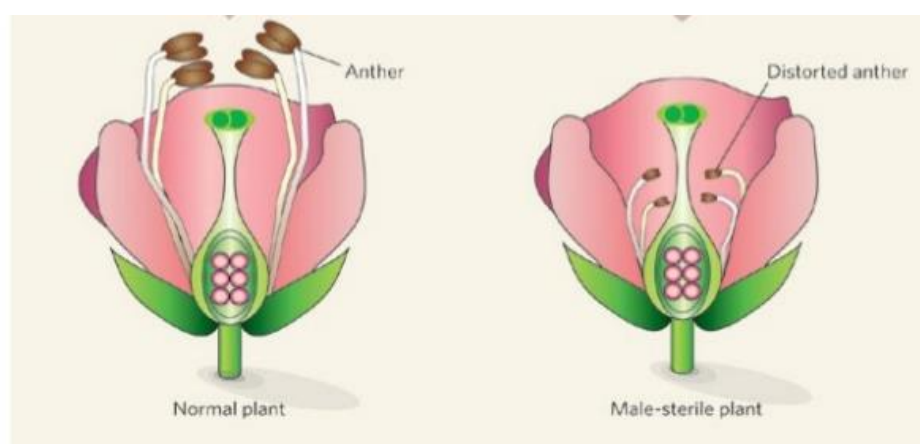
For this Cuba has developed and has, since 2007, a risk assessment guide containing the hazard identification techniques and some related to monitoring of LMOs elements. It works in coordination with the Ministry of Public Health of Cuba based on the evaluation of those who's LMOs intended for direct use as food or processing.”

### **Understanding various traits of GM Crops: Vol. 9. Male sterility**

This month we explain the trait: Male sterility. The selection of trait is made at random.

Male sterility is defined as an absence or non-function of pollen grain in plant or incapability of plants to produce or release functional pollen grains. The use of male sterility in hybrid seed production has a great importance as it facilitates controlled cross-pollination. There are different strategies used to genetically engineer crops with male sterility however the most common is the Barnase system.

In this system, cauliflower mosaic virus (CaMV) 35S promoter-directed expression of the ribonuclease barnase, a bacterial protein, from *Bacillus amyloliquefaciens* inhibits pollen formation and results in male sterility of the transformed plants. Linkage of the barnase gene with the (*Streptomyces hygroscopicus*) bar marker gene, which encodes an enzyme that inactivates glufosinate, permits identification of the male-sterile line before crops begins to flower.



An example of the Male sterile crop is the ACS-BNØØ5-8. To read more about this trait and to access the record, please visit the FAO GM Foods Platform at <http://tiny.cc/fao-gm-mlstr>.

## Question of the month- I would like to provide a comment/suggest a change to the Platform. How do I proceed?

Any comments can be send to [gm-platform@fao.org](mailto:gm-platform@fao.org). However, if you are suggesting a change to the Platform, the suggestion should be submitted through your (closest) national Focal Point to have a consensus by all Codex Members. Please discuss your suggestion with your country's Codex Contact Point to seek a way to obtain the consensus among Codex Members (not Observers).

## Molecular stacks – the same as single events or not?

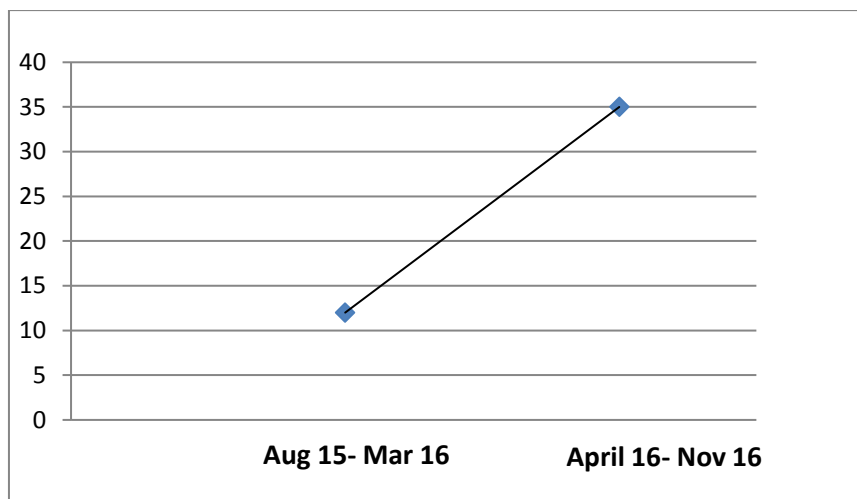
No, molecular stacks are not the same as GMOs with single events. Certain UIs may seem like they have only one transformation event, however the GMO contains two or more traits. This process is usually known as a molecular or a vector stack wherein which two (or more) genes are connected together and then directly placed within the genome, just like creating a single trait. At present, there are no guidelines for the naming of molecular stacks and hence the UIs are created the way a UI would be created for a single trait. However, on the [FAO GM Foods Platform](#), beside every UI, the traits are displayed, so it is easy for the visitors to identify whether it is a commodity with single or multiple traits. Take a look at the different records today on the FAO GM Foods Platform at <http://tiny.cc/fao-gm-ui> to observe the differences between a single event, a stacked event, and a molecular stacked event.

<a href="#">ACS-BN011-5</a>	Single Transformation event	Canola / Oilseed rape / Rape Seed	Bromoxynil tolerance
<a href="#">ACS-BN001-4</a>		Canola / Oilseed rape / Rape Seed	Fertility restoration, Glufosinate tolerance, Kanamycin resistance
<a href="#">ACS-BN002-5</a>		Canola / Oilseed rape / Rape Seed	Fertility restoration, Glufosinate tolerance, Kanamycin resistance
<a href="#">ACS-BN003-6</a>	Molecular Stacked event	Canola / Oilseed rape / Rape Seed	Fertility restoration, Glufosinate tolerance

### [Identifying the type of transformation event on the FAO GM Foods Platform](#)

## Increase in the number of visits to the FAO GM Foods Platform

We are pleased to inform that since the introduction about the section on the different traits on the FAO GM Foods Platform, we have seen an increased number of visits to the Platform. We are pleased that the information provided is of use to our readers. Kindly let us know if you would like any particular topic to be addressed in the newsletter or a new series of information by emailing us at [GM-Platform@fao.org](mailto:GM-Platform@fao.org).



**Increase in the visits to the traits page**

### **Editor's note**



We are very pleased to inform that we have 168 country profiles filled out. We encourage countries to fill out their country profile with the new options provided. We currently have 173 nominated Focal Points, 168 Focal Points registered to the Platform, 988 records and 40 mutual links to the Platform. The latest eNewsletter as well as the past issues are available at <http://fao.org/gm-platform>.

### **Questions? Comments?**

We are always happy to receive any questions, comments and/or suggestions to improve the Platform. Feel free to contact us at [GM-Platform@fao.org](mailto:GM-Platform@fao.org).

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