

Experiences, challenges and needs in inter-agency communication at the national level - Mauritius



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Introduction

- Mauritius: middle-income economy, net food importer, EU as the main export market, signed the Convention on Biological Diversity in 1992.
- Main legislation: The genetically modified organisms act of 2004 but few sections of the GMO Act have been proclaimed.
- Aim: To provide for measures to regulate the responsible planning, development, production, use, marketing and application of genetically modified organisms in Mauritius.
- The Act is under the purview of the Ministry of Agro-Industry & Food Security.

Legal and Institutional framework

- The GMO Act establishes the National Biosafety Committee (NBC)- Ministry of Agro-Industry & Food Security.
- The Food regulations of 1999 issued under the Food Act of 1998- Ministry of Health & Quality of life.
- The Environment Protection Act of 2002 – Ministry of Environment.
- The Plant Protection Act of 2002- Ministry of Agro-Industry & Food Security.

Cross-sectoral mechanisms

- NBC is composed of representatives from various Ministries where exchange of information occurs.
- National Codex Committee: Regular meetings with stakeholders from various sectors- participation in Codex EWG/meetings.
- National SPS Committee
- Focal and contact points: Biosafety, BCH and GM Food Platform.

Challenges

- Public participation in the whole process.
- Setting up an independent team of competent people to process the applications.
- Setting up and ensuring the operation of an office to cater for biosafety issues.
- Provision of accredited GM testing services by the regulatory testing laboratory.
- To designate trained and competent officials from relevant institutions involved to cater for GM issues.
- To set up mechanism to deal with crisis situation pertaining to biosafety issues.

Role of international organizations

- To provide guidelines to ensure the active participation of the different players in the system.
- To provide requirements for all national focal points.
- To have guidance document to effectively integrate biosafety into national policies.
- To assist in the development of regional networking systems and laboratory harmonisation processes.
- To provide training on relevant topics such as risk assessment, GMO detection.
- To organise workshops to share experiences.
- To set up a knowledge and sharing platform for exchange of information, experts' views and guidance in crisis situations.

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THANK YOU