



Regional Training Workshop
“Enforcement of biosafety regulations: principles, specific examples and institutional communication and cooperation”

3-6 February 2015, Prague, Czech Republic

Agricultural research has enabled a growing populace to avoid mass starvation by increasing much-needed food supplies, reducing hunger and alleviating poverty. Nonetheless, agricultural production will need to increase by 60% worldwide and double in the developing countries by 2050.

While a general consensus has been reached on the advantages that the innovative biotechnologies may bring to farmers, one of the agricultural biotechnologies, genetic modification (GM) technology, up to now applied mostly in plants, still divides the public opinion in many countries in the world, after the first commercialized GM product reached the markets in 1994. For almost 20 years of cultivation, the areas with GM crops have grown consistently with an more than 100- fold increase, and were chosen particularly by small and medium producers (90% of the farmers) from developing countries.

In order to maximize the benefits and minimize the risks of the technology and in response to public concerns related to possible biodiversity loss or potential health issues, the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety to the Convention of Biological Diversity (CBD), was internationally agreed in 2000 and entered into force in 2003. The Protocol contains procedures and guidance that assists countries to deal with transboundary movement of living modified organisms (LMOs) while countries adopt their national legislations on biosafety, the latter being an obligation to the Parties of the CBD.

The countries with economies in transition in Europe and Central Asia with exception of Uzbekistan are parties to the CBD and most of those, except the Russian Federation, have ratified the CPB.

Being at very different stages of preparation and adoption of domestic legislations on biosafety, two of the key topics that are being discussed by governments and stakeholders in those countries are implementation and enforcement.

Some common issues include:

- lack of technical and institutional capacities of public administration, including ministry officials, risk assessors and inspectors ;
- lack of updated curricula and educational programmes including for the general public;
- lack of capacities to deal with illegal transboundary movements of GMOs;
- lack of technical and institutional capacities in environmental risk assessment,
- how to address the so called new plant breeding techniques;
- lack of laboratory capacities (equipment, consumables and validated methods) and lab certifications for detection, identification and quantification of GMOs in seeds and food and feed stuffs;
- mistrust in the efficiency of governmental institutions, including courts;
- insufficient communication including between institutions and authorities;
- cost of regulation and enforcement.

During the Regional Training Workshops “How to establish and implement a risk management system for genetically modified crops”, held in Prague, Czech Republic in 2008, and the FAO regional training course “Implementation of biosafety systems: Risk communication and monitoring of GM crops and products”, Prague 2013, it was agreed that there is need for continuous capacity building in setting up efficient and transparent biosafety systems in the Region. Participants requested FAO to follow-up implementation and enforcement of the national biosafety systems while addressing communication and new plant breeding techniques as horizontal issues.

With this perspective, FAO will hold a Regional Training Workshop titled “Enforcement of biosafety regulations: principles, specific examples and institutional communication and cooperation” from 3 to 6 February 2015, in Prague, Czech Republic, International hotel.

Participants in the workshop will be around 30 experts from Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, FYR of Macedonia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Montenegro, Serbia, Tajikistan, Turkey, and Ukraine.

The workshop is primarily intended for participants who are or will be responsible in the near future of implementing their national biosafety system; current or potential members of regulatory and enforcement bodies (e.g. inspectorates) and ministerial officials dealing or meant to deal with GMOs. The attendees shall be senior officials and scientists from countries of Eastern Europe and Central Asia, responsible for enforcement of the national biosafety law and have a good command of English.

The **objectives** of the training workshop are to:

- Acquire knowledge and share experiences on implementation and enforcement of the national biosafety laws and regulations, institutional communication and new recombinant technologies
- Identify critical gaps and issues of common importance in the Region, requiring capacity development;
- Strengthen the informal network of senior officials and scientists involved in implementing a biosafety system that was established through previous capacity building activities under the Czech technical cooperation with FAO.

The **topics of the workshop** will be covered by formal lectures and practical interactive sessions. A half-day study visit to the GMO reference laboratory is foreseen.

The participants are expected to submit a country report on their NBFs and their enforcement as well as to fill out a questionnaire prior to the workshop.

The official language of the workshop will be English. Simultaneous translation to Russian will be also provided.

Training and discussion topics include:

- Biosafety regulations, implementation and enforcement (introduction of general terms)
- Czech experience in enforcement:
 - a. Biosafety committee
 - b. Food safety inspections
 - c. Environmental safety inspections
 - d. Laboratory detection, identification and quantification
 - e. Co-existence between GM, organic and conventional agriculture
- Specific cases of enforcement
 - A. new plant breeding techniques
 - B. communication between institutions
- Shared experiences and comparative analysis of the national biosafety frameworks FAO assistance and capacity development programmes in biosafety
- Identification of critical gaps, good practices and issues requiring capacity development

It is anticipated that several specialists from Czech Republic and FAO would provide technical assistance to the workshop as speakers and resource persons.