

**CARTAGENA PROTOCOL ON BIOSAFETY:
Sharing of Peer Reviewed Analyses of Socio-economic Impacts**

Any consideration of socio-economic impacts in decision-making must remain within the scope of the language of Article 26 of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety (Protocol), which requires that these considerations: (a) must be taken into account in a manner consistent with Parties' international obligations; and (b) must be limited to those arising from the impact of living modified organisms (LMOs) on the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity. Work on this issue should focus on continued research and information-exchange.

A. Scope of Socio-economic Considerations and Methods for Taking them into Account

- Article 26 of the Biosafety Protocol establishes the right of Parties to take into account socio-economic considerations arising from the impact of LMOs with regard to the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity in reaching a decision on whether to import these organisms.
- However, when Parties are taking these impacts into account, Article 26.1 places several constraints on this consideration. Firstly, Parties must limit any consideration of socio-economic impacts of LMOs to those impacts on the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity. Broadening the scope and type of socio-economic considerations to those beyond this limitation would be inconsistent with the provisions of the Protocol, reduce the transparency of the regulatory process, and increase the overall cost and length of time required in regulatory decision-making.
- In addition, such considerations may only be taken into account consistent with Parties' existing international obligations. While the parameters of this limitation have not yet been explored in the Protocol context, consideration of existing obligations under the World Trade Organization (WTO) Agreements and those found under other international standard-setting bodies provide guidance to the Parties on this issue. Decisions and guidance provided under the Protocol must take this limitation into account and avoid outputs that would jeopardize Parties' abilities to comply with their other legal obligations.

B. Cooperation in Research and Information Exchange

- As recognized by the Parties, information sharing about the potential positive and negative impacts of LMOs on the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity is an important part of the public education and awareness activities necessary for informed choice and public acceptance of biotechnology. In addition, cooperation with regard to research and information exchange about the potential positive and negative socio-economic impacts of LMOs, including impacts on indigenous and local communities, can be useful for government regulators, public research institutes, private sector, academia, and other stakeholders as well as the public at large. As such, the GIC supports efforts to identify ways and means for useful cooperation.
- It is important that discussions concerning this item are limited to the mandate in the Protocol and, in particular, to the current work plan that focuses exclusively on cooperation on research and information exchange. Given that extensive peer-reviewed material is already available about

the socioeconomic impacts of biotechnology products, including to smallholder farmers and local communities, the GIC does not believe it would be useful or appropriate for Parties to expend resources to create new programs of work or other additional activities in this area.

- Accordingly, the private sector supports the decision of the Parties at their second meeting calling on Parties, other Governments and organizations to continue to cooperate on research and information exchange regarding potential socio-economic impacts of LMOs on the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity within relevant processes under other organizations and arrangements, and to share such information on the Biosafety Clearing-House (BCH).
- An example of information-sharing of peer-reviewed material about the socio-economic benefits of biotechnology can be found on the CropLife International Database of the Benefits and Safety of Biotechnology. This tool provides access to research studies that meet agreed-upon criteria for high quality that highlight important impacts of agricultural biotech products and technologies. These studies can be easily searched in terms of crops, traits, countries, regions, and/or beneficial impact area (agronomic, environmental, safety and health, socioeconomic, developing countries or co-existence). Please visit www.croplife.org/biotechdatabase to view the information on this searchable database.

C. Elements of a Draft Decision on Socio-economic Considerations

- The private sector supports the call in the draft decision for consideration at MOP-4 for Parties, Governments and other relevant organizations to continue to share their research methods and results on socio-economic impacts of LMOs through the BCH, and the request to Parties to share their experiences in taking socio-economic considerations into account in national LMO decision-making.
- In addition, the private sector looks forward to continuing to contribute to the work of the Coordination Meetings of Governments and Organizations Implementing and/or Funding Capacity Building Activities and supports work by the Executive Secretary to establish if and how socio-economic considerations are identified as capacity building needs, and how they are already taken into account in national LMO decision-making processes.
- To this end, the private sector supports a decision on socio-economic considerations that provides guidance to the Executive Secretary and to the Coordination Meeting of Governments and Organizations Implementing and/or Funding Capacity Building Activities to undertake work that leads to identification of Parties' *actual* needs with respect to capacity building related to socio-economic considerations in national decision-making that is consistent with the scope of Article 26.

Background

Article 26 of the Biosafety Protocol provides that Parties may take into account socioeconomic considerations in reaching a decision on import of LMOs, but only to the extent consistent with that country's other international obligations. Paragraph 1 further limits what may be taken into account by defining socioeconomic considerations as those "arising from the impacts of LMOs on the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity, especially with regard to the value of biological diversity to indigenous and local communities." The second paragraph of Article 26 requires Parties to

cooperate on research and information exchange on any socio-economic impacts of LMOs, especially on indigenous and local communities.

For more information on this and other Protocol implementation issues, please visit <http://www.croplife.org> and link to the Biosafety Protocol.