

COORDINATION, INFORMATION AND OUTREACH

FAO actively participates in the Biosafety Capacity Building Coordination Mechanism established by Conference of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety, to facilitate exchange of information, with a view to promoting partnerships and maximising synergies and complementarities between various capacity building initiatives for the implementation of the Protocol. Through the Coordination mechanism, government agencies, relevant organizations and donors involved in implementing or funding biosafety capacity building initiatives share information and experiences on their ongoing initiatives; identify key biosafety capacity building issues, priority needs and ways to address them; identify overlaps and potential opportunities for collaboration; and facilitate interaction, dialogue, and collaboration.

Examples of collaboration between biosafety capacity building projects implemented by different international agencies include the case of Swaziland, where the same steering committee served two projects: the FAO project, “Strengthening national capacities in the formulation and implementation of legal instruments on genetically modified organisms”; and the United Nations Environment Programme/Global Environment Facility (UNEP/GEF) initiative for the “Development of the National Biosafety Framework”. For regional projects, the steering committees involve focal points from the participating countries, members of the technical expert group, the project secretariat, representatives from the donor government, if any,



FAO officers and representatives from other agencies working in biotechnology.

An FAO multilingual Web site on Biotechnology in Food and Agriculture¹⁵ was launched in 2001 as illustrated in Box 3. It is subdivided into 12 areas, ranging from FAO documents to country biotechnology policy documents.

Information on biosafety capacity building projects is currently available on the Biosafety Clearing House information sharing mechanism at <http://bch.cbd.int/database/>, which FAO, according to Article 20 of the Cartagena Protocol, is actively part of. Specific project Web sites were also set up for the two subregional initiatives in Asia and MERCOSUR Ampliado.

However, with a growing portfolio of biosafety-related activities, FAO is compiling the biosafety capacity building project documentation in a systematic manner in order to make it available on the FAO web page as well as through regularly up-to-date outreach material. This will ensure better visibility to FAO's activities and will amplify opportunities for establishing new partnerships and collaborations.

EXPERIENCE GAINED AND THE WAY FORWARD

- The Organization is taking corrective actions to ensure that more attention be devoted to outreach activities and information on its biosafety capacity building project activities at different operational levels.

¹⁵ <http://www.fao.org/biotech>

BOX 3 // FAO WEB SITE ON BIOTECHNOLOGY IN FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

(The FAO Biotechnology Web site - <http://www.fao.org/biotech>)

The Web site, launched in Arabic, Chinese, English, French and Spanish in 2001 and expanded to include Russian in 2007, provides information on FAO's work and international developments regarding biotechnology techniques and products, as well as on related policy and regulatory issues surrounding research and deployment of agricultural biotechnology.

In addition to an overview of FAO's activities in agricultural biotechnology; a synthesis of biotechnology in the agro-industry, crop, fisheries, forestry and livestock sectors; links to other relevant Web sites and to national biotechnology policy documents of FAO Members, the site contains the following key features:

- the *FAO Biotechnology Glossary* (published originally in English and later translated to Arabic, French, Russian, Serbian, Spanish and Vietnamese), that is also available as a multilingual searchable database at http://www.fao.org/biotech/index_glossary.asp;
- the *FAO Statement on Biotechnology* (<http://www.fao.org/biotech/stat.asp>), produced by the FAO Interdepartmental Working Group on Biotechnology in response to the many requests to know “where FAO stands on the biotechnology issue”;
- a *documents section* (<http://www.fao.org/biotech/doc.asp>), currently providing over 180 web links to a wide range of articles, books, meeting reports, proceedings and studies published by FAO, or prepared in collaboration with FAO, in recent years concerning biotechnology in food and agriculture;
- the *FAO Biotechnology Forum* (<http://www.fao.org/biotech/forum.asp>), making a neutral platform available for people to exchange views and experiences on biotechnology in developing countries. The Forum has almost 3 500 members worldwide and has hosted 15 moderated e-mail conferences since the year 2000, with about 50 percent of all messages posted coming from participants living in developing and developed countries respectively.



- **FAO-BioDeC** (http://www.fao.org/biotech/inventory_admin/dep/default.asp), a searchable database providing data on agricultural biotechnologies in use or in the pipeline in developing countries and countries with economies in transition. Launched in 2003 for the crop sector only, it now contains over 4 000 entries from the crop and other agricultural sectors of more than 100 countries (end of 2008). The entries come predominantly from the crop and forestry sectors, with less extensive coverage for livestock and fisheries. A network of national correspondents has also been established for data validation and updating. In 2004, it was extended by including “Developing Country Biotechnology Profiles”, a searchable database which aims to provide easy access to key, updated sources of information regarding biotechnology-related policies, regulations and activities of 128 individual developing countries;
- **news and events**. The home page includes news and events that are relevant to applications of biotechnology in food and agriculture in developing countries. The items’ main focus is on the activities of FAO, of other United Nations agencies/bodies and of the 15 Consultative Groups on International Agricultural Research (CGIARs) research centres. All items posted since January 2002 are available on the Web site.





