

BIO SAFETY



A Quarterly
Newsletter

Newsletter

Message from Dr. M. Veerappa Moily, Minister Environment & Forests and President of Conference of Parties (COP) on the Tenth anniversary of the "Entry into Force of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety"



In his greetings to the global community on the 10th anniversary of the "Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety", Dr. M. Veerappa Moily, the current President, of COP emphasized that the objectives of the CPB and its Supplementary Protocol on Liability and Redress should be at the top of the national and global environmental agenda. He also indicated that India assures high level of commitment to the noble objectives of these international instruments in handling the safe transfer, handling and use of living modified organisms (LMOs). The message can be accessed at <http://bch.cbd.int/protocol/10thAnniversary.shtml#opening>

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From the Desk of Editor



I am pleased to inform you that new building of Ministry of Environment and Forests, named as Indira Paryavaran Bhawan has been inaugurated by Prime Minister of India on February 25, 2014. It is India's first on site Net Zero Building built by adoption of solar passive design and energy efficient building material. The building has an earthquake resistant structure with a total plinth area of 31,488sqm. The building covers only 30% of the plot area. More than 50% area, outside the building, is a soft area with plantation and grassing.

Activities under the Phase II Capacity Building Project have advanced in several areas viz. risk assessment and risk management, handling, transport, packaging and identification of LMOs. The first phase of stocktaking assessment and development of biology documents would be shortly completed. We shall keep our readers updated on the project activities and its outcomes on a regular basis.

Hem Pande
(Additional Secretary)
Ministry of Environment and Forests

Prime Minister Inaugurates "Indira Paryavaran Bhawan": India's First on Site Net Zero Building, February 25, 2014



Dr. Manmohan Singh, Prime Minister of India dedicated to the Nation "Indira Paryavaran Bhawan" in the presence of Dr M. Veerappa Moily, Minister for Environment & Forests and Shri Jairam Ramesh Minister for Rural Development on February 25, 2014. The centrally air conditioned office building which has provision to accommodate about 600 officials of the Ministry of Environment and Forests is located on Jorbagh Road and in proximity to other Central Government Ministries/Departments. This building has the largest roof top solar-powered panel over any multi-storied building in the country and is India's first 'Net Zero Building' which will produce its own energy. Setting the tone for the way government buildings could be in future, the new 'green building' of the Union Environment Ministry will not only generate its own power but also contribute to the power grid. It is built by adopting solar

passive design and energy efficient building material; it is expected to be a trendsetter in the country. The building is targeted to achieve LEED (Leadership in Energy & Environmental Design) India Platinum Rating and GRIHA (Green Rating for Integrated Habitat Assessment) 5 star rating.



The Seventh Meeting of the Conference of Parties serving as Meeting of Parties (COP-MOP 7)

The Seventh Meeting of the Conference of Parties serving as Meeting of Parties (COP-MOP 7) is scheduled to be hosted by Republic of Korea from 29 September to 3 October, 2014 in Pyeongchang, South Korea. The sixth COP-MOP was hosted by India and presently the Ministry of Environment and Forests has the Presidency of the Governing Body of the COP-MOP.

The CBD Secretariat has uploaded the provisional agenda and the annotations to the agenda at <http://bch.cbd.int/protocol/meetings/documents.shtml?eventid=5193>



The first meeting of the Ad Hoc Technical Expert Group (AHTEG) on Socio Economic considerations, February 17-21, 2014 at Seoul



The first meeting of the AHTEG on Socio Economic considerations was held in Seoul, from 17-21 February, 2014. It was attended by 22 experts from the Parties to the Protocol and 5 experts from the observer countries to the Protocol. Dr. Ranjini Warriar, Director, Ministry of Environment and Forests, Government of India, represented India as one of the five experts from Asia Pacific Region. Mr. Andreas Heissenberger from Austria and Dr. Ranjini Warriar served as Co-Chairs of the meeting.

The Secretariat gave background information on how the discussions on socio-economic considerations have evolved in the COP-MOP process and an overview of the activities that have taken place since COP-MOP 6. In addition the Secretariat also introduced the outcomes



of the online discussion forum, the regional online real time conferences and the global overview of the information on socio economic considerations arising from the impact of living modified organisms on the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity. The members of the AHTEG also identified additional information relevant to the global overview such as the information on activities of the European Union in this area (the European GMO Socio-economic Bureau) which may provide useful information to assist countries to perform socio-economic assessments. It was also mentioned that the World Bank has a safeguard policy under provisions on socio-economic assessment of projects funded by the Bank which could be included to serve as a useful reference.

Following extensive deliberations, the AHTEG developed the "Elements of a framework for conceptual clarity on socio-economic considerations", which has been annexed to its report. The AHTEG report along with recommendations on modalities for facilitating the development of guidelines on socio-economic considerations as emerged will be considered by COP-MOP 7.

The detailed report of the meeting can be assessed at: <http://www.cbd.int/doc/meetings/bs/bs-ahteg-sec-01/official/bs-ahteg-sec-01-03-en.pdf>

National Inventory for Wild Relatives of Important Crops

United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) developed an inventory for wild and weedy relatives of important crops to aid the conservation of these so-called "Crop Wild Relatives" (CWRs) and ensure their availability as prized sources of genetic diversity for an array of economically important traits, including improved drought tolerance and resistance to pests and diseases. The U.S. national inventory covers 4,596 taxa from 985 genera and 194 plant families that are either indigenous to the United States or have become "naturalized"-established of their own accord following human introduction. Among CWR of major crops, the genus *Helianthus* (sunflower) is the most abundant, numbering 73 total species, including *H. annuus* (domesticated as the sunflower). The inventory also contains a chestnut, and wild rice, as well as so-called "wild-utilized species," with direct use for medicinal, ornamental, landscaping, environmental restoration, or industrial purposes and contains approximately 250 species of CWR that are considered high priority because they have a lot of potential in plant breeding, and species that are vulnerable because they are rare, endangered, or have not been collected and placed in gene banks. The inventory



itself lists 17 major crops that have benefitted from traits associated with 55 native CWR and its information will be fully integrated into Germplasm Resources Information Network (GRIN) to take advantage of the existing data and facilitate searches by taxonomy, threat status, and geographic distribution.

Read more at: <http://www.ars.usda.gov/is/pr/2014/140127.htm>

FAO GM Foods Platform

The FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization) launched an "Online platform on GM Foods", at the side lines of the 36th Codex Alimentarius Commission held on July 1, 2013 in Rome, Italy. This side event was attended by 120 participants.

This platform besides sharing information on safety assessment of GM foods also facilitates the effective utilization of food safety assessment in situations of Low level Presence (LLPs) of the r-DNA plant materials in food.

The FAO GM Foods Platform is freely accessible for browsing information. However only Focal Points officially nominated by national authorities are allowed to upload data/information on the Platform. Countries need to be aware of such new developments and to consider the fundamental scope and purpose of safety assessment as well as the eventual regulatory framework.

The meeting report and photographs can be accessed at <http://www.fao.org/food/food-safety-quality/gm-foods-platform/en/>

ISAAA Brief 46: Global Status of Commercialized Biotech/GM Crops: 2013



ISAAA released their annual brief on "Global Status of Commercialized Biotech/GM Crops: 2013", intended to present a consolidated set of data that will facilitate

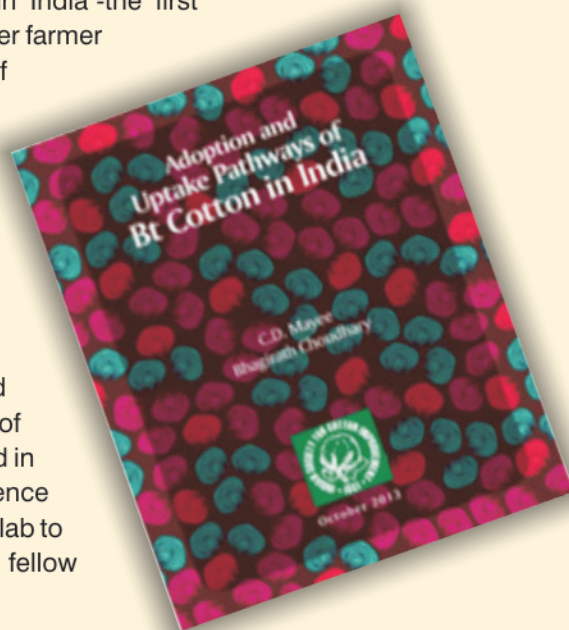
knowledge based discussion of the current global trends regarding biotech crops. The global hectareage of biotech crops have increased more than 100-fold from 1.7 million hectares in 1996 to over 175.2 million hectares in 2013, at an annual growth rate of 3%, up 5 million from 170 million hectares in 2012. In 2013, 19 developing countries and 8 industrial countries planted biotech crops. The five lead developing countries in biotech crops in the three continents of South are China and India in Asia, Brazil and Argentina in Latin America, and South Africa on the Continent of Africa. They collectively grew 47% of global and together represent 41% of the global population of 7 billion, which could reach 10.1 billion by the turn of the century in 2100. Bangladesh approved a biotech crop (Bt eggplant) for planting for the first time in 2013 serving as exemplary model for other small poor countries.

Full publication can be accessed at: <http://www.isaaa.org/resources/publications/briefs/46/default.asp>

Adoption and uptake pathways of Bt Cotton in India

The Indian Society for Cotton Improvement (ISCI), released the comprehensive survey report on the "Adoption and Uptake Pathways of Bt Cotton in India"-the first authentic account of field realities of Bt cotton involving smallholder farmer across the three ecologically distinct cotton growing States of Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh and Punjab. The idea of studying the adoption and uptake pathways of Bt cotton in India presented an opportunity for the society to assess the performance and spread of Bt cotton and gain insights as to how, why, when, where accept new technologies. The technology has spread to nearly 10.8 million hectares equivalent to 93% of the total cotton area of 12.1 million hectares in 2011-2012. The process of adoption of Bt cotton surpassed many controversies and hurdles of agitations, legal cases and prejudices by a section of society opposed to introduction of genetically modified crops in the country. Bt cotton has succeeded in controlling bollworm infestation for 11 successive years and hence these studies presents a new pathway of technology transfer from lab to land as and when such technologies will be made available to fellow farmers in our country in the future.

Full publication can be accessed at: http://www.isaaa.org/india/media/ISCI_FullReport_Small.pdf



UPCOMING EVENTS

TITLE	ORGANIZED/HOSTED BY	DATE AND VENUE	WEBSITE
NATIONAL			
Awareness Workshop on Issues Related to Genetically Modified (GM) Crops	Biotech Consortium India Limited	April 26, 2014, Tirupati, Andhra Pradesh	
Global Conference on Technological Challenges & Human Resources for Climate Smart Horticulture: Issues and strategies	ASM Foundation, New Delhi and Navsari Agricultural University	May 28-31, 2014, Navsari, Gujarat	http://nau.in/announce.php?id=12364
INTERNATIONAL			
Risk assessment considerations for RNAi-based GM plants	European Food Safety Authority (EFSA)	June 4-5, 2014, Brussels, Belgium	http://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/events/event/140604.htm
Risk Assessment: The Role of Science in GMO Decision-making	National Biotechnology Development Agency, Abuja, Nigeria (ICGEB) Biosafety Unit, Trieste, Italy	June 30 - July 4, 2014, Trieste, Italy	http://www.icgeb.org/meetings-2014.html
Theoretical and Practical Course "Plant Tissue Culture: Tool for Genetic Engineering of Plants"	ICGEB and National Biotechnology Development Agency, Nigeria	August 10-23, 2014, Abuja, Nigeria	http://www.icgeb.org/meetings-2014.html
12th Asian Conference and Expert Consultation on Maize for Food, Feed, Nutrition and Environmental Security	Asia-Pacific Association of Agricultural Research Institutions (APAARI), International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center (CIMMYT) and Vietnam Academy of Agricultural Sciences (VAAS)	October 27, 29, 2014, Hanoi, Vietnam	http://www.apaari.org/events/12th-conference-on-maize.html
13th International Symposium on the Biosafety of Genetically Modified Organisms (ISBGMO13)	International Society for Biosafety Research (ISBR)	November 9-13, 2014, Cape Town, South Africa	http://isbr.info/ISBGMO13



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Disclaimer : The information in this newsletter has been compiled from various sources and does not necessarily depict views of the Ministry of Environment & Forests, Government of India.