

South Asia Biosafety Program

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BANGLADESH

Workshop on Pre-Release and Post-Release Regulation of Genetically Engineered Plants

Farhana Mustari, Deputy Director (Natural Resources Management) and Kazi Nazmul Mahmud, Assistant Director (Natural Resources Management), Department of Environment



Participants and trainers at the Workshop on Pre-Release and Post-Release Regulation of Genetically Engineered Plants (17 November 2023).

To strengthen the capacity on biosafety for the regulatory authority of Bangladesh, a two-day training was held on 17-18 November 2023 under the workshop series "Origins of biosafety internationally, the relevant policies and regulations in Bangladesh, and the necessary regulatory process during each phase of biotechnology research, development, and release."

The fourth and final workshop in the series, this training focused on "Pre-Release and Post-Release Regulation of GE Plants" and was held at the South Asia Biosafety Program office in Gulshan, Dhaka. As was the case for the three previous training activities, this session was jointly organized by the Department of Environment (DoE) and Agriculture & Food Systems Institute (AFSI), under the auspices of the South Asia Biosafety Program (SABP). Nine officers from different wings of the DoE attended this workshop.

The workshop commenced with a recap of the learnings from previous workshops by Prof. Dr. Rakha Hari Sarker, Professor, University

of Dhaka and Country Coordinator, SABP. The first presentation of the technical session was on "General Concepts for Regulation of Research, Development, Transportation, and Handling of GE Plants," delivered by Dr. Andrew F. Roberts, CEO, AFSI. Dr. Roberts explained the importance of regulatory mechanisms at various stages of research, development, and release of genetically engineered plants in the environment.

Following this presentation on the importance of regulation in biotechnology, Dr. Aparna Islam, Professor, Brac University and AFSI Fellow, conducted a discussion session on

the "Key Provisions for Pre-Release Biosafety Regulation in the Bangladesh Biosafety Guidelines."

Dr. Vibha Ahuja, Chief General Manager, Biotech Consortium India Limited, delivered the next presentation. The topic of her presentation was "Regulation of Contained Facilities and Greenhouses." Dr. Ahuja explained the requirements for contained trials and associated physical and biological factors and cited some examples of such trials from India.

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Drs. Karen Hokanson and Rakha Hari Sarker at the workshop (17 November 2023).

Dr. Karen Hokanson, Senior Scientific Program Manager, AFSI, presented a very informative and elaborate talk on “Regulation and Conduct of Confined Field Trials.” Dr Hokanson’s presentation answered critical questions about CFT requirements and processes, which was very useful for the participants. The first day concluded with an interactive Q&A session.

On the second day of the workshop, Dr. Andrew F. Roberts and Dr. Karen Hokanson jointly conducted a session on “Understanding Post Release Monitoring,” where compliance monitoring and insect resistance monitoring for GE plants were discussed with several examples. Then, Dr. Vibha Ahuja delivered a presentation on “Documenting Decisions and Meeting International Obligations.” Six exercises on different topics were conducted during this workshop, providing participants with a good opportunity to brainstorm various biosafety issues, including monitoring.

Six exercises on different topics were conducted during this workshop, providing participants with a good opportunity to brainstorm various biosafety issues.



Participants with Dr. Vibha Ahuja at the workshop (17 November 2023).

It is important to note that the purpose of the four workshops in the series was to improve the ability of the officials from DoE, Bangladesh and the members of the Biosafety Core Committee (BCC). Each of the four workshops was meticulously planned and executed to provide valuable knowledge to the participants, specifically to help them better understand the roles and responsibilities of biosafety authorities regarding various aspects of biosafety regulations in Bangladesh. The four workshops were very effective in teaching all aspects of biosafety of GE plants and other related issues, which will create a firm foundation for the participants to work efficiently while reviewing applications, using the concept of problem formulation, and to better understand biosafety regulations in Bangladesh.



Dr. Andrew Roberts leading a discussion during the workshop (17 November 2023).

National Consultation on Updating the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan and Adopting National Biodiversity Targets

Dr. Vibha Ahuja, Chief General Manager, Biotech Consortium India Limited



Group photo of participants at the National Consultation Meeting (28 November 2023).

On 28-29 November 2023 at the Indian National Science Academy in New Delhi, the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) and the National Biodiversity Authority (NBA), in association with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and Biotech Consortium India Limited (BCIL), organized a National Consultation Meeting to discuss updating the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) and the adoption of National Biodiversity Targets (NBTs) in alignment with the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KMGBF) (see page 4).

The consultation meeting was attended by representatives of line Ministries/Departments, Member Secretaries of State Biodiversity Boards and Union Territory Biodiversity Councils, members of the Working Group on NBSAP, special invitees, subject matter specialists, observers, supra-national and national organizations, community-led organizations, members of the NBA, private sector and finance experts, young professionals, and UN volunteers.

Speaking at the occasion, NBA Chairperson Shri C. Achalender Reddy informed participants that India had participated and contributed meaningfully to the successful adoption of the KMGBF at the fifteenth meeting of the Conference of Parties to the CBD held in December 2022, adding that the existing National Biodiversity Action Plan prepared in 2014 needs to be updated in line with the KMGBF's four global goals and 23 global targets, along with the identification of national targets according to the circumstances, priorities, and capabilities of the country.

The UNDP Resident Representative in India, Ms. Isabelle Tschan, highlighted the country's leadership role in biodiversity conservation and the Indian ethos of preserving biodiversity. Adoption of SMART targets (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-Bound) and the participation of a wide array of stakeholders, including the

private sector, would be the key to the successful implementation of the NBSAP in the country.

Chairman of the Working Group on NBSAP, Dr. V. Rajagopalan, stated that mainstreaming biodiversity across sectors is key to implementing the NBSAP effectively. National adoption of KMGBF targets, with numeric values and the preparation of a robust monitoring framework, should be discussed widely with a view to incorporating the aspirations of local communities and tribal people.

Additional Secretary, Ministry of Environment Forest and Climate Change, Gol, Shri Tanmay Kumar, stated that the NBSAP should be owned by all the stakeholders and be made accessible and implementable. Digitization of action plans and means of implementation should be ensured

during the planning process. Demonstrating community benefits of biodiversity conservation should be an important consideration of the action plan. In implementing the NBSAP, local bodies, in particular, should play a vibrant role and be relatable to local communities.

The two-day consultation involved perusing the contents of the KMGBF global goals and targets, deliberating and drafting the text of draft National Targets, and discussing components/elements, enabling conditions, alignment, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), as well as the adoption of headline indicators, component indicators, complementary indicators, and other national indicators, as well as non-state actor commitments, means of implementation and barriers, additional means, etc. Further deliberations shall continue at regional, state, thematic, and inter-ministerial levels.

The NBSAP has launched a dedicated webpage to provide information and details on collecting information from stakeholders. A brochure has also been prepared to provide background information for consultative meetings.

More information is available at:

<http://nbaindia.org/nbsap/index.html>

Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework and Target 17 on Biosafety

The “Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework” (KMGBF) adopted in December 2022, includes four goals and 23 targets to be achieved by 2030. The framework’s four long-term goals for 2050 relate to the *2050 Vision for Biodiversity*. The framework has 23 action-oriented global targets for urgent action over the decade to 2030. The actions set out in each target need to be completed by 2030. Actions to reach these targets should be implemented consistently and in harmony with the CBD and its Protocols and other relevant international obligations, taking into account national circumstances, priorities, and socioeconomic conditions.

TARGET 17 of the GBF on “Strengthen biosafety and distribute benefits of biotechnology” reads as follows:

Establish, strengthen capacity for, and implement in all countries in biosafety measures as set out in Article 8(g) of the Convention on Biological Diversity and measures for the handling of biotechnology and distribution of its benefits as set out in Article 19 of the Convention.

More information can be accessed at:

<https://www.cbd.int/gbf/>

ANNOUNCEMENT

Modifications in the List of Infective Microorganisms Corresponding to Different Risk Groups, 2021

Dr. Arelene Asthana Ali, Biotech Consortium India Limited


The *Regulations & Guidelines for Recombinant DNA Research and Biocontainment, 2017*, notified by the Department of Biotechnology (DBT) vide Office Memorandum (OM) No. BT/BS/17/635/2015-PID dated 1 April 2018, provides the “List of Infective Microorganisms Corresponding to Different Risk Groups” in Annexure 1, which determines the operational practice and minimum physical containment requirements and, accordingly, allows the selection of appropriate biosafety level facilities.

The “List of Infective Microorganisms Corresponding to Different Risk Groups, 2021” was revised and updated by DBT vide an OM dated 9 December 2021 to supersede Annexure I of “Regulations & Guidelines for Recombinant DNA Research and Biocontainment, 2017,” to be read in conjunction with the aforementioned guideline.

DBT has issued two OM’s regarding modifications to the above list.

- Entry of Pseudorabies virus under the list of Risk Group 3 microorganisms has been withdrawn vide OM dated 19 July 2023.
- Reclassification of Tomato Leaf Curl New Delhi Virus from Risk Group 3 to Risk Group 2 vide OM dated 15 November 2023.

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No: PID-15011/1/2020-PPB-DBT
Dated: 19.07.2023

OFFICE MEMORANDUM

In continuation to this Department's OM of even number dated 09.12.2021, it is informed that the entry of Pseudorabies virus in “List of Infective Microorganisms corresponding to different Risk Groups, 2021” superseding the Annexure I of “Regulations & Guidelines for Recombinant DNA Research and Biocontainment, 2017” under the List of Risk Group 3 microorganism viruses has been withdrawn.

(Dr. Nitin K. Jain)
Member Secretary, RCGM &
Scientist-F, DBT

To

- 1) All Ministries/ Departments of Government of India
- 2) All Institutional Biosafety Committees
- 3) Communication Cell, DBT

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Dated: 15.11.2023

OFFICE MEMORANDUM

In continuation to this Department's OM of even number dated 09.12.2021 and 19.07.2023, it is informed that the entry of Tomato Leaf Curl New Delhi Virus in “List of Infective Microorganisms corresponding to different Risk Groups, 2021” superseding the Annexure I of “Regulations & Guidelines for Recombinant DNA Research and Biocontainment, 2017” has been reclassified from Risk Group 3 to Risk Group 2.

(Dr. Nitin K. Jain)
Member Secretary, RCGM &
Scientist-G, DBT

To

- 1) All Ministries/ Departments of Government of India
- 2) All Institutional Biosafety Committees
- 3) Communication Cell, DBT

The documents can be accessed from:

<https://ibkp.dbtindia.gov.in>

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

EVENT	ORGANIZED BY	DATE	WEBSITE
INDIA			
National Seminar <i>cum</i> Alumni Meet-2023 on Climate Resilient Agriculture for Sustainable Development and Doubling Farmers Income	Alumni Association ANDUA&T and Acharya Narendra Deva University of Agriculture and Technology	24-25 December 2023 Ayodhya	https://www.nduat.org/
International Conference on Impact of Climate Change on Global Food, Livestock, Livelihood, and Environment Security: Advanced Approaches and Mitigation Strategies	Navsari Agricultural University	28-30 December 2023 Navsari	https://nau.in/index
Training on Advances in Plant Biotechnology and Molecular Biology for Crop Improvement	ICAR-Central Tuber Crops Research Institute (CTCRI)	2-22 January 2024 Thiruvananthapuram	https://www.ctcri.org/
International Conference on Emerging Post Harvest Technologies for Shelf Life Enhancement and Valorization of Horticultural Crops	Tamil Nadu Agricultural University and the Society for Promotion of Horticultural Science & Technology	4-5 January 2024 Coimbatore	https://tnau.ac.in/site/icphtv24/
45 th Annual Meeting of the Plant Tissue Culture Association (India) and Symposium on Recent Advances in Plant Biotechnology	Department of Biotechnology, Pondicherry University	23-25 January 2024 Pondicherry	https://www.pondiuni.edu.in/university_news/45th-annual-meeting-of-plant-tissue-culture-association-india-symposium-on-recent-advances-in-plant-biotechnology/
20 th Biennial International Conference on Sustainable Animal Nutrition for Global Health and Production: Innovations and Directions	Animal Nutrition Society of India	23-25 January 2024 Chennai	https://ansi.org.in/
ICAR Sponsored Winter School on Climate Smart Sugarcane Agriculture for Food and Energy Security in India	ICAR-Sugarcane Breeding Institute (SBI)	31 January-20 February 2024 Coimbatore	https://sugarcane.icar.gov.in/
INTERNATIONAL			
Second Meeting of the Multidisciplinary <i>Ad Hoc</i> Technical Expert Group on Synthetic Biology to Support the Process for Broad and Regular Horizon Scanning, Monitoring and Assessment	CBD Secretariat	29 January-2 February 2024 Montreal, Canada	https://bch.cbd.int/protocol#tab=2
Second Meeting of the <i>Ad Hoc</i> Technical Expert Group on Risk Assessment	CBD Secretariat	27 February-1 March 2024 Montreal, Canada	https://bch.cbd.int/protocol#tab=2



SOUTH ASIA
BIOSAFETY PROGRAM

The South Asia Biosafety Program (SABP) is an international development program implemented in India and Bangladesh with support from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). SABP aims to work with national governmental agencies and other public sector partners to facilitate the implementation of transparent, efficient, and responsive regulatory frameworks for products of modern biotechnology that meet national goals as regards the safety of novel foods and feeds, and environmental protection.


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