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# South Asia Biosafety Program

NEWSLETTER FOR PRIVATE CIRCULATION ONLY – NOT FOR SALE



BANGLADESH

## Concluding Session of the Institutional Biosafety Officer Training Program

Dr. Md. Imtiaz Uddin, Chief Scientific Officer and Head, Biotechnology Division, Bangladesh Institute of Nuclear Agriculture (BINA)


*Guests and participants at the Concluding Session of the IBO Training Program (25 February 2023)*

The Ministry of Agriculture (MoA), Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, in collaboration with the South Asia Biosafety Program (SABP), Agriculture & Food Systems Institute (AFSI), and Biotech Consortium India Limited (BCIL), organized the *Concluding Session of the Institutional Biosafety Officer (IBO) Training Program* on 25 February 2023 at Hotel Sarina, Dhaka, Bangladesh. The IBO Training Program aimed to ensure that institutions in Bangladesh are aware of their obligations under the biosafety regulatory system and are empowered to work with researchers to meet these obligations while conducting research involving genetically engineered plants. Twenty participants from different institutes, including the National Agriculture Research Systems (NARS) institutes, the National Institute of Biotechnology (NIB), and universities, have completed this training program.

**Mrs. Wahida Akter [...] underscored the importance of products developed via the application of modern biotechnological research reaching the farmers' field in a timely manner, through a transparent and efficient biosafety system.**

At this concluding event, Mrs. Wahida Akter, Honorable Secretary, MoA, was present as the Chief Guest. Dr. Md. Ruhul Amin Talukder, Additional Secretary, MoA, and Dr. Shaikh Mohammad Bokhtiar, Executive Chairman, Bangladesh Agricultural Research Council (BARC), were present as Special Guests. The program commenced with a welcome and brief introduction to SABP by Prof. Dr. Rakha Hari Sarker, Country Coordinator, SABP. Dr. Andrew F. Roberts, Chief Executive Officer, Agriculture & Food Systems Institute (AFSI), delivered a lecture on the "Journey and Outcomes of IBO Training Program," where he summarized the entire journey and described how the IBOs should benefit themselves and train others for better compliance with the regulatory regimes.

Dr. Vibha Ahuja, Chief General Manager, Biotech Consortium India Ltd. and Senior Advisor, SABP, delivered a speech on "GE Crops Development by Public Sector Institutions: Expectations and Support from Regulatory Systems." Later, Dr. Aparna Islam, Professor, Brac University and Fellow, AFSI, introduced the "Bangladesh Biosafety Portal: A Key Initiative for Information Sources." On behalf of the training participants, Dr. Mohammad Kamrul Hasan, Senior Scientific Officer, Biotechnology Division, Bangladesh Agricultural Research Institute (BARI), shared his learning experience from this training program.

Addressing the audience as a Special Guest, Dr. Shaikh Mohammad Bokhtiar emphasized the need for cutting-edge research and development of genetically engineered crops in compliance with the biosafety regulations. Dr. Md. Ruhul Amin Talukder, in his speech as a Special Guest, expressed his appreciation of SABP's activities, particularly in formulating the SOPs and recording formats in different organizations through the trained IBOs.

Mrs. Wahida Akter, in her speech as the Chief Guest, voiced her appreciation of the various activities and initiatives taken by SABP in Bangladesh. She expressed her keen interest in modern biotechnological research and mentioned that in the near future, the development of new crop varieties is required, considering climate change issues, as

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well as food and nutritional security in Bangladesh. She stated that SABP can play a vital role by embracing the initiatives and developing collaborative programs with NARS and other institutes. She underscored the importance of products developed via the application of modern biotechnological research reaching the farmers' field in a timely manner, through a transparent and efficient biosafety system. She asked the scientists to identify any drawbacks that may hinder the research and development activities in which they are involved. The participants were awarded certificates for participation and completion of the training program. Concluding the event, Prof. Dr. Rakha Hari Sarker offered a vote of thanks to all the guests and congratulated all the participants for successfully completing the IBO training program.

BANGLADESH

## MoU Signing Ceremony Between the Ministry of Science and Technology, Bangladesh and Agriculture & Food Systems Institute

Dr. Rakha Hari Sarker, Country Coordinator, South Asia Biosafety Program


*Guests and invitees at the MoU Signing Ceremony Between the Ministry of Science and Technology, Bangladesh and Agriculture & Food Systems Institute (26 February 2023).*

Recognizing the need for improving awareness regarding products derived from agricultural biotechnology, their safety assessment, and their use in food and feed, as well as the evolving nature of ongoing research and development in Bangladesh, collaborative activities are required. There is also an increased need to effectively implement biosafety regulations and strengthen biosafety compliance by stakeholders in Bangladesh. Therefore, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) has been signed between the Ministry of Science and Technology (MoST), Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh and the Agriculture & Food Systems Institute (AFSI), USA, to facilitate biosafety activities in areas of mutual interest, which will be implemented through the South Asia Biosafety Program (SABP). The purpose of the MoU is to strengthen both policy and technical capacity within MoST to facilitate the implementation of a coordinated biosafety regulatory framework for Bangladesh. The signing ceremony was held on Sunday, 26 February 2023, at the Multipurpose Hall of the National Science & Technology Complex in Dhaka.

**Architect Yeafesh Osman [...] urged the scientists to work seriously around biotechnology so that the people of Bangladesh can obtain the wonderful achievements of biotechnology in improving their livelihood.**

Architect Yeafesh Osman, Honorable Minister, MoST, was the Chief Guest in this MoU signing ceremony. Mr. Ziaul Hasan ndc, Senior Secretary, MoST, was present as the event's Chair and signed the MoU on behalf of MoST. Dr. Andrew F. Roberts, Chief Executive Officer, AFSI, was present as a Guest and signed the MoU for AFSI.

Others present included: Dr. Vibha Ahuja, Chief General Manager, Biotech Consortium India Ltd. and Senior Advisor, SABP; Dr. Rakha Hari Sarker, Country Coordinator, SABP; Mr. Sium Ahmed, Biosafety Officer, SABP; Prof. Dr. Haseena Khan, Secretary, Bangladesh Academy of Sciences (BAS); Dr. Md. Salimullah, Director General, National Institute of Biotechnology (NIB); Dr. Aparna Islam, Professor, Brac University and Fellow, AFSI.

The ceremony began with a welcome address by Dr. Md. Selim Reza, Deputy Secretary, MoST, who explained the context of the ceremony and briefly introduced the program's guests. Dr. Andrew F. Roberts highlighted AFSI's activities in Bangladesh as part of SABP and explained the brief concept of the MoU. Following his speech, Dr. Vibha Ahuja delivered a presentation on modern biotechnology's benefits and global context. Maj. Gen. Prof. Dr. ASM Matiur Rahman (Retd.), Fellow, BAS, then provided remarks on this occasion. In his speech as the Chair, Mr. Ziaul Hasan ndc elaborated on this MoU's significance and requested that the concerned scientists harness this MOU's benefits in planning their future research activities.

In his remarks as the Chief Guest, Architect Yeafesh Osman expressed his satisfaction in completing the MOU and thanked everyone involved in making this initiative successful. He urged the scientists to work seriously around biotechnology so that the people of Bangladesh can obtain the wonderful achievements of biotechnology in improving their livelihood. Prof. Dr. Rakha Hari Sarker offered a vote of thanks.

Scientists and senior officials from the MoST, NIB, BAS, Bangladesh Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (BCSIR), and the National Museum of Science and Technology joined the event to make it successful. Mr. Sium Ahmed of SABP coordinated the program.

BANGLADESH

# "Genome Editing: How Does the World See It?" - A Seminar with the Brac University Natural Sciences Club

Shucheta Nazia Archi, Department of Mathematics and Natural Sciences, Brac University


*Dr. Andrew F. Roberts at the BUNSC seminar "Genome Editing: How Does the World See It?" (27 February 2023).*

Genome editing techniques are widely discussed and have been at the center of scientific conferences and policy discussions in recent years. It went from a novel innovation to being debated by different stakeholder groups, including the general population. Many questions are frequently raised, such as "Should gene editing be universally accepted?" and "Do the regulations really need to be strict?"

To get the answers to these questions from the perspectives of the regulatory committees of different countries around the globe, Brac University Natural Sciences Club (BUNSC) organized a seminar titled "Genome Editing: How Does the World See It?" at the Brac University, Mohakhali, Dhaka campus. The Keynote Speaker and Chief Guest was Dr. Andrew F. Roberts, CEO of the Agriculture and Food Systems Institute (AFSI), USA. The seminar was also attended by Mr. Sium Ahmed, Biosafety Officer, South Asia Biosafety Program (SABP), Bangladesh, Dr. Mohammad Rafiqul Islam, Associate Professor and Advisor of BUNSC, Brac University, and Dr. Aparna Islam, Professor, Brac University. Ninety students attended the seminar.

Dr. Roberts talked about the history of agriculture, from unselective breeding by the first-ever farmers to the latest genetic engineering technologies. His lecture included how GMOs came into existence, which agricultural products are marked as GMOs in which part of the globe, how the regulatory authorities landed their current set of rules, etc. Dr. Roberts reviewed some definitions of genome editing, talking about variations and a lack of specificity, as some definitions do not distinguish genome editing from genetic engineering. He also encouraged students to try and come up with their own definitions.

He further gave an illustrative explanation of the three types of Site-Directed Nuclease techniques (SDN 1, SDN 2, and SDN 3) for genome editing and the core differences between the types of SDNs. He touched upon the CRISPR-cas9 technique of genome editing and explained how a mechanism in bacteria came out as the source of the discovery of these novel techniques. He then elaborated on the region-specific approvals of products made using genome editing techniques through a color-coded world map. He described the development of regulatory protocols around the globe for approving genome-edited crops based on which SDN category they belong to. He also pointed out the influence of one nation's regulatory guidelines or decisions over those of neighboring countries.

**Dr. Roberts talked about the history of agriculture, from unselective breeding by the first-ever farmers to the latest genetic engineering technologies.**

The first-ever regulatory concerns over genetically modified organisms were primarily centered on the safety of scientists within the laboratory. Environmental concerns and consumer safety were added to the protocols later on. Nevertheless, the consumption of GMOs has not yet shown any harmful effects on humans or animals. More than enough precautions are being taken while working with and releasing GMO products. In the case of genome-edited crops, these concerns are minimized, and therefore, regulators around the world relaxed the regulatory burdens.

After the lecture, there was a short question-and-answer session where attending students could interact with Dr. Roberts and voice

*Participants at the BUNSC seminar (27 February 2023).*

*Organizers of the BUNSC seminar, along with Dr. Andrew F Roberts, Dr. Aparna Islam, and Mr. Sium Ahmed (27 February 2023).*

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their concerns. He comprehensively answered every question, adding relatable examples for ease of understanding. Overall, the seminar was a very memorable and knowledgeable experience for all attendees. It opened up a whole new portal of curiosity and ambition in the minds of the young scientists. Most importantly, the students gained much confidence in the field of genome editing. For BUNSC, it was an opportunity to build a worthwhile relationship with someone of such caliber. Another achievement for all Brac University students was Dr. Roberts' indication that he would accept future invitations from BUNSC. Thus concluded the seminar that made knowledge fun and sparked anticipation in many hearts.

INDIA

## A Multi-Country Project to Promote Biosafety Through Cooperation in Asia

Ms. Tashi Yangzom, KIPABiC and Dr. Vibha Ahuja, Biotech Consortium India Limited


*Participants at the Inception Workshop: UNEP-GEF Multi-Country Project - Initiation and Consultation (14 November 2022)*

A multi-country project on "Promoting the Safe Application of Biotechnology Through Multi-Country Cooperation in the Implementation of National Biosafety Frameworks in Asia" was initiated by Mongolia, the Philippines, India, Bangladesh, Korea Institute for Promoting Asia Biosafety Cooperation (KIPABiC), and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) on strengthening the implementation of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety. The project is an effort to contribute to cooperation in line with Article 14 of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety and Decision CP-9/4, which calls for cooperation at the regional and sub-regional level by implementing joint projects for maximizing synergies and opportunities for sharing of experiences, information, and expertise.

The implementing agencies include the National Biosafety Committee, Ministry of Environment and Tourism (Mongolia), National Committee on Biosafety of the Philippines (Philippines), Department of Environment, Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (Bangladesh), Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (India), and KIPABiC (Korea). Funding for the project has been provided through the Global Environment Facility (GEF) funds by partner countries and a grant from the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Energy (MOTIE) of the Republic of Korea, through UNEP. KIPABiC leads the project coordination under the guidance and leadership of Dr. Homin Jang.

The inception workshop for the project was convened from 14-17 November 2022 at Daejeon, South Korea. Participants from all four countries, UNEP, and representatives of the Korea Biosafety Clearing House (KBCH), MOTIE, Republic of Korea, participated in the event. The inception workshop provided a clear understanding amongst the project-executing entities on the implementation process and tasks at national and multi-country levels. The preparation of a detailed project document is in progress.

A side event on "Joint Efforts to Promote Biosafety through Multi-Country Cooperation" was organized at the Tenth Conference of Parties serving as Meeting of Parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety (CP-MOP-10) held at Montreal, Canada, jointly by participating countries, KIPABiC, and UNEP. The event showcased the project details and provided additional information to other interested Asian countries to get involved in Project Component I on Multi-Country Collaboration and Cooperation on Biosafety Issues and further discussed how they can participate in the project activities, using their GEF allocation or their funds. The event was attended by more than 80 participants comprising representatives from governments, non-governmental organizations, inter-governmental organizations, media, and youth groups.

**The event highlighted the importance of continued interactive biosafety networking, harmonization, and cooperation to ensure full compliance with the Cartagena Protocol.**

The event highlighted the importance of continued interactive biosafety networking, harmonization, and cooperation to ensure full compliance with the Cartagena Protocol. There were experience-sharing sessions highlighting regional cooperation in Asia, Africa, and the Caribbean sub-region. It was also an opportunity to network and share the lessons learned under this project during project preparation and implementation to garner interest and support from other countries and observers. Providing an update on the project, Dr. Homin Jang, Chief Director, KIPABiC, stated that living-modified organism (LMO) usage is on the rise and also noted that countries in Asia are at different stages of Biosafety Protocol implementation. He informed participants that Korea had earlier coordinated the implementation of the Asia BCH Family Project till 2020, and KIPABiC has now made efforts to sustain its work beyond 2020. Accordingly, KIPABiC consulted UNEP to create new

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*Dr. Homin Jang (KIPABiC), Ms. Doreen Mnyulwa (RAEIN-Africa), Dr. Abhilasha Singh Mathuriya (India), and Mr. Mohammed Solaiman Haider (Bangladesh) at the CP-MOP-10 side event (13 December 2022)*

regional projects endorsed by the Global Environment Facility (GEF). Dr. Alex Owusu-Biney, UNEP, expressed his appreciation of the efforts of participating countries and stressed the importance of regional cooperation in implementing the Cartagena Protocol, focusing on transboundary movement. He opined that the Parties could come together to harmonize their processes, handling issues jointly where there are commonalities. He also highlighted capacity-building opportunities, including how to incorporate biosafety needs into National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs) and into a future post-2020 global biodiversity framework (GBF). Underlining the importance of biosafety with respect to human health and the environment, Mr. Song Youngjin, Director, MOTIE, Korea, also called for joint, concerted efforts to ensure implementation of the Protocol in light of the complexity of the transboundary nature of LMOs. He highlighted regional meetings convened by the Republic of Korea, drew attention to the Biosafety Clearing-House mechanism, and lauded the establishment of the Asia Biosafety Family.

Experiences on regional biosafety projects completed/underway were shared by Ms. Doreen Mnyulwa, Executive Director, Regional Agricultural and Environmental Innovations Network Africa (RAEIN-Africa) for the Multi-Country Project to Strengthen Institutional Capacities on LMO Testing in Support of National Decision Making (MCP-ICLT) involving 11 countries in southern Africa and Dr. Michelle John, University of the West Indies, St. Augustine on the UNEP/GEF project involving 13 countries. Reflections from countries were shared by representatives from partner countries, *viz.* Mongolia, the Philippines, India, Bangladesh, and Korea.

*For more information, please email: kipabic@gmail.com*

**LINKS**

**A summary of the event notified by the Convention on Biological Diversity:**
**https://www.cbd.int/side-events/4573**

**Event Coverage by the *Earth Negotiations Bulletin* of the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD):**
**https://enb.iisd.org/joint-efforts-promote-biosafety-through-multi-country-cooperation**

**INDIA**

## Establishing Biosecurity Norms at Indian Castor Bean Processing Plants

Dr. Vibha Ahuja, Biotech Consortium India Limited


*Participants at the Workshop on Establishing Biosecurity Norms at Indian Castor Bean Processing Plants (6 February 2023)*

India is the world's single largest producer of castor seed products, accounting for more than 85% of world castor seed output. An in-person capacity-building workshop on "Establishing Biosecurity Norms at Indian Castor Bean Processing Plants" was organized by Sandia National Laboratories (SNL) and Biotech Consortium India Limited (BCIL) in association with the Indian Society of Oilseeds Research (ISOR).

The workshop was organized to create awareness about the biosecurity risks associated with improper inactivation and disposal of the waste "mash" and the potential for low-effort biological attacks using ricin extracted from improperly inactivated waste "mash."

Key topics covered were: Orientation to Bio-risk Management, Biosecurity Risk Assessment, Pillars of Biosecurity, Bio-Risk Mitigation and Hazardous Waste Disposal, and Standard Operating Procedures - Record Keeping. Fourteen participants attended the workshop. The participants were informed about how to institutionalize biosecurity best practices regarding waste management while countering the threat of insider and non-state actors' access. In addition, the participants learned about biosecurity fundamentals, risk assessment, bio-hazardous waste disposal, and risk management planning.

*For more information, please email cvwilli@sandia.gov.*

INDIA

# Workshop on Agricultural Biotechnology for Crop Improvement in Kolkata

Dr. Vibha Ahuja, Biotech Consortium India Limited

Plant breeders have been working to address farmers' issues for better productivity but are at times limited by the available germplasm and time. Agricultural biotechnology, particularly modern genetic engineering and gene editing techniques, has significant potential for crop improvement. Several research institutions in West Bengal have also been working on the use of agricultural biotechnology, including genetic engineering and gene editing. There are promising leads that can help deal with problems the farmers face and improve productivity. Taking note of these developments, Biotech Consortium India Limited (BCIL) and the Federation of Seed Industry of India (FSII) jointly organized a one-day state-level workshop on agricultural biotechnology in association with the University of Calcutta.

The "Workshop on Progress in Agricultural Biotechnology: Policies and Practices" was held on 17 January 2023 at Meghnad Saha Auditorium, Calcutta University College of Science & Technology, Kolkata. Eminent experts in the field, including from West Bengal, shared their views and research findings. Approximately 80 participants from universities and research institutions in West Bengal attended the workshop.

**Dr. K.C. Bansal [...] emphasized the need to increase crop productivity by using less water, fertilizer, pesticides, land, and labor, underscoring the need for intervention using new technologies for sustainable agriculture.**

Welcoming the speakers and participants, Dr. Koustubh Panda, Professor, Department of Biotechnology, and Dr. B. C., Guha Centre for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology, University of Calcutta, expressed their appreciation of the timely convening of the workshop given the recent policy decision by the Government of India regarding the exemption of SDN-1 and SDN-2 genome-edited plants from Rules, 1989.

Dr. Vibha Ahuja, Chief General Manager, informed participants about the series of state-level workshops organized by BCIL as knowledge-sharing initiatives and discussed the way forward for targeted crop improvement in the states. Five such workshops were jointly organized earlier with state agricultural universities, research institutions, and relevant state departments/agencies in Hyderabad, Ludhiana, Bengaluru, Lucknow, and Bhopal.

In his keynote address, Prof. Swapan Datta, Former Vice-Chancellor, Biswa Bangla Biswabidyalay and Former Deputy Director General (CS), ICAR, acknowledged the success of agriculture in making India food secure but underlined the need for climate-resilient, nutritious crops that will require the use of innovative technologies. He expressed his appreciation of the positive decisions taken by the government in approving genetically modified mustard and various field trials in the recent past.

Dr. K.C. Bansal, Secretary, National Academy of Agricultural Sciences, India, and Former Director, ICAR-National Bureau of Plant Genetic Resources, gave an update on agribiotechnology in India. He emphasized the need to increase crop productivity by using less water, fertilizer, pesticides, land, and labor, underscoring the need for intervention using new technologies for sustainable agriculture. Prof. Swarup K. Chakraborty, Vice Chancellor, Uttar Banga Krishi Viswavidyalaya, also talked about the vulnerability of the Indian food system and the need for sustainable agriculture to improve crop productivity.

Dr. Bidyut Sarmah, Director, DBT-North East Centre for Agricultural Biotechnology, Assam Agricultural University, Jorhat, and Dr. Md. Abdul Yousuf Akhond, CSO and Head, Biotechnology Division, Bangladesh Agricultural Research Institute, gave presentations on the use of GM crops for sustainable agriculture. Dr. Sarmah spoke about initiatives at AAU regarding the development of Bt chickpea and other crops. Subsequently, Dr. Akhond shared information about field experience deploying Bt brinjal technology in Bangladesh.

Technical presentations on gene editing technology and emerging regulatory policies were made by Dr. Kutubuddin Ali Molla, Scientist (Biotechnology), Crop Improvement Division, ICAR-National Rice Research Institute, Cuttack, and Dr. Vibha Ahuja from BCIL. Dr. Sampa Das, INSA Honorary Scientist, Division of Plant Biology, Bose Institute, and Dr. Dipankar Chakraborti, Head, Department of Genetics, the University of Calcutta, then gave a detailed overview of research achievements and initiatives in agricultural biotechnology work in West Bengal. Finally, Dr. Bharat Char, Chief Scientific Officer, MAHYCO, reinforced the fact that gene editing is a knowledge-based technology that can be extended to multiple smaller crops that are relevant to India. He underlined the success of agriculture biotechnology in India as witnessed with Bt cotton and listed other crops and nations that are reaping the benefits of the technology.

Participants raised several questions and interacted with the speakers. It was generally agreed that there is an urgent need to take forward the research initiatives to advanced testing and field trials in a timely manner to benefit farmers.


*Speakers at the Workshop on Progress in Agricultural Biotechnology: Policies and Practices (17 January 2023).*

*Dr. K.C. Bansal at the Workshop on Progress in Agricultural Biotechnology: Policies and Practices (17 January 2023).*

INDIA

## Know-Your-Customer (KYC) Workshop for Indian Pharmaceutical Industry

Dr. Vibha Ahuja, Biotech Consortium India Limited


*Participants at the Workshop on Know-Your-Customer (KYC) Best Practices for Indian Pharmaceutical Industry (2 February 2023)*

An in-person capacity-building workshop on "Know-Your-Customer (KYC) Best Practices" for the Indian Pharmaceutical industry was organized by Sandia National Laboratories (SNL) and Biotech Consortium India Limited (BCIL) in association with the Indian Drug Manufacturers' Association (IDMA). The objective of the workshop was to raise awareness of the chemical weapons (CW) proliferation potential of key pharmaceuticals and share the best practices to be followed by the concerned industries. In particular, the event focused on pharmaceutical companies producing and/or using potentially lethal (e.g., fentanyl) and other incapacitating and/or dissociative agents (e.g., benzodiazepines) and other interested stakeholders.

**The objective of the workshop was to raise awareness of the chemical weapons (CW) proliferation potential of key pharmaceuticals and share the best practices**

Key topics covered were industrial case studies, chemical security threats, pharmaceuticals of concern, illicit procurement tactics, illicit procurement case studies, an overview of KYC principles and practices, interactive scenario-based activities on KYC indicators, and KYC implementation, with an overarching focus to develop strategies that deny access to weaponizable pharmaceuticals. The workshop was highly interactive, with presentations, case studies, and discussions. In addition, participants were informed about the knowledge and resources to implement KYC best practices and policies at their institutions to ensure their products are not acquired for illicit purposes. Fifteen participants attended the workshop.

*For more information, please contact cvwilli@sandia.gov.*

INDIA

## Proficiency Testing Scheme for Detection of GMOs by EIA-Kochi

Dr. Vibha Ahuja, Biotech Consortium India Limited

The Government of India set up the Export Inspection Council (EIC) to work towards sound development of India's export trade through quality control and inspection and for related matters. The Export Inspection Agency (EIA) Kochi laboratory is notified as the National Referral Laboratory to detect the presence or absence of LMOs/GMOs under the Seeds Act, 1966 by the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, Government of India and recognized in the area of GMO testing by the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI), Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India.

EIC provides customized simultaneous Proficiency Testing (PT) schemes according to the needs of regulators and testing laboratories, which comply with the international requirements of ISO/IEC 17043 and ISO 13528. EIA-Kochi is accredited as a PT provider in the field of GMO testing in compliance with ISO/IEC 17043:2010, and the scope of accreditation includes a simultaneous scheme in the matrix/group of food and agriculture products under the group for detection of GM elements, such as the CaMV 35S Promoter and NOS Terminator. Participation in the PT scheme can give support to:


- assess the ability of individual laboratories to detect GM in samples.
- evaluate or demonstrate the suitability and quality of analytical procedures.
- requirements for obtaining or maintaining ISO/IEC 17025:2017 accreditation.
- additional requirements of the regulatory body(ies).

*For more information, please contact eia-kochiptp@eicindia.gov.in.*

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

| EVENT | ORGANIZED BY | DATE | WEBSITE |
|---|---|---|---|
| **INDIA** | | | |
| Global Millet (Shree Anna) Conference | Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, in partnership with the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FICCI) | March 18, 2023<br>New Delhi | https://forms.gle/jhFm7YiAXbTaY9Ng9 |
| National Conference on Millets: The Future Super Food for the World (Millets Conference 2023) | ASSOCHAM, in association with ICAR-National Academy of Agricultural Research Management (NAARM), ICAR-Indian Institute of Millets Research (IIMR), and ICMR-National Institute of Nutrition | March 24, 2023<br>Hyderabad | https://www.assocham.org/events.php?event=forthcoming-events |
| 8th International Conference on Recent Advances in Agriculture, Animal Husbandry, Sciences & Technology for Sustainable Entrepreneurship (RAAAHSTSE-2023) | Rajmata Vijayaraje Scindia Krishi Vishwa Vidyalaya | March 26-28, 2023<br>Gwalior | http://www.rvskvv.net/ |
| International Conference on Recent Trends in Translational Research | Bharat Institute of Higher Education and Research | March 29-31, 2023<br>Chennai<br>(in-person and online) | https://forms.gle/UrUjfxJNBnqpDUn89 |
| XVI Agricultural Science Congress and ASC Expo | National Academy of Agricultural Sciences (NAAS) | October 10-13, 2023<br>Kochi | http://www.16asc2023.in |
| Training Programme on Recent Technological Advancements in Horticulture and Forest Crops | Department of Biotechnology, College of Horticulture, Dr. Yashwant Singh Parmar University of Horticulture and Forestry | December 23-30, 2023<br>Solan | https://www.yspuniversity.ac.in |
| **INTERNATIONAL** | | | |
| 16th ISBR Symposium | International Society for Biosafety Research | April 30-May 4, 2023<br>St Louis, MO, USA | https://isbr.info/symposium |
| International Conference on Gene-Edited Crops: Enabling Future Commercialisation and International Trade | Murdoch University, ISAAA Inc., and Malaysian Biotechnology Information Centre (MABIC) | April 26-27, 2023<br>Canberra, Australia | https://bit.ly/ICGED2023 |
| BIO International Convention | Biotechnology Innovation Organization (BIO) | June 5-8, 2023<br>Boston, MA, USA | https://www.bio.org/events/bio-international-convention |
| 6th International Rice Congress 2023 | International Rice Research Institute and Department of Agriculture, Republic of the Philippines | October 16-19, 2023<br>Manila, Philippines | https://www.irri.org/IRC2023-teaser.html |

**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.

SOUTH ASIA BIOSAFETY PROGRAM

Agriculture & Food Systems Institute

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