**Biosafety webinar**

**Good practices for effective national communication mechanisms**

FAO, CBD and OECD

*Concept Note*

1. **Background**

On 12 November 2014 the Webinar on the International Databases on Biosafety was jointly organized by Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). During the webinar, the mandate, scope and activities of the FAO GM Foods Platform, the Biosafety Clearing-House (BCH) of the CBD and the OECD BioTrack Product Database were discussed.

In the discussion session during the webinar, many questions and comments were raised by participants in the chat box. In addition, some participants were asked to prepare verbal comments in advance to initiate the discussions. All these comments provided an elaborate source of perspectives, challenges and needs of countries and will be effectively used to practically improve the databases and achieve more synergies among them.

One of the key points discussed was the importance of national focal/contact points for three databases working together in close collaboration. Although the participants of the webinar widely acknowledged this need, many participants stated that they are in need of establishing and/or improving effective communication and coordination mechanisms.

Many participants considered a webinar approach is useful in facilitating the discussions on effective communication mechanisms among the national colleagues, and asked FAO, CBD and OECD to continue organizing similar webinars.

Thus FAO, CBD and OECD plan to organize the second biosafety webinar on “Good practices for effective national communication mechanisms”.

1. **Objective**

The objective of the upcoming Webinar is to provide a forum to facilitate the discussions among the focal points of the three databases on biosafety (FAO, CBD and OECD) and the sharing experiences and good practices in establishing/improving national communication mechanisms on the topic of biosafety.

1. **Participants**

This Webinar will be organized primarily for governmental officials who collaborate with FAO, CBD and/or OECD. Upon request the participation of corporate stakeholders and/or academics can be considered.

1. **Date and Time**

The Webinar is tentatively scheduled on **Wednesday 27th of May.** To accommodate various time zones, the Webinar will be held in two sessions: Session 1 (9.00 - 11.00, Rome time), and Session 2 (16.00 to 18.00, Rome time).

1. **Pre-webinar activity: online discussion session**

Prior to the webinar, a preparatory online discussion (e-discussion) session will be hosted by the Biosafety Clearing-House of the CBD for the focal points of the three databases.

During the online discussion, participants will be invited to share their views on the challenges and experiences they faced in establishing and maintaining effective communication among the focal points of the three databases and relevant biosafety authorities.

In addition to sharing their own challenges and experiences, participants may wish to consider the following guiding questions:

* Does your country have a mechanism in place for facilitating inter-agency communication on biosafety-related issues?
* Have you experienced any challenges in establishing or maintaining inter-agency communication on biosafety-related issues?
* What challenges have you faced meeting or streamlining national obligations and/or contributions (data uploads) to the databases?
* What role could the international organizations have in assisting national communication processes?
* What do you think would be key factors for facilitating inter-agency communication on biosafety at the national level?

The outcomes of the e-discussion session will serve as a basis to tailor and further refine the content of the webinar, as well as to identify participants who will be invited to deliver presentations on good practices during the webinar.

1. **Content**

The webinar will consider the outcome of the e-discussion session and will include several presentations and discussion sessions. The provisional programme is as follows:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|   | **Time** | **Agenda Item** | **Presenter/facilitator** |
| 1 | 5 min | Opening | FAO |
| 2 | 5 min | Presentation on the FAO Database | FAO |
| 3 | 5 min | Presentation on the BCH Database | CBD |
| 4 | 5 min | Presentation on the OECD Database | OECD |
| 5 | 10 min | Summary of the previous Webinar | FAO  |
| 6 | 5 min | Unique Identifiers (UI) | OECD |
| 7 | 10 min | Outcome of the e-discussion session | CBD |
| 8 | 10 min | Q&A Session | Facilitated by CBD |
| 9 | 10 min | Country Presentation 1  | T.b.d. |
| 10 | 10 min | Country Presentation 2 | T.b.d. |
| 11 | 10 min | Country Presentation 3 | T.b.d. |
| 12 | 30 min | Interactive Discussion | Facilitated by 3 organizations |
| 13 | 5 min | Closure | OECD |

*Presentations*

The presentations by the representatives of the hosting organizations (#2, #3 and #4) will provide an overview of the mandate, scope and content of their respective databases. The presentation on a summary of the previous Webinar (#5) will give an overview of the outcomes of that webinar. A short presentation (#6) will be made by a representative of the OECD to highlight the importance of using the OECD Unique Identifiers, and will include the information on the new algorithm checker. A summary of the e-discussion session will follow (#7). A short “Q&A” session (#8) will provide an opportunity for those wishing to comment or need clarification on the items discussed up to that point. Presentations #9, #10 and #11 will be delivered by participants from countries that have established, at the national level, efficient communication mechanisms among Focal Points with the view to sharing their experiences and views in these mechanisms.

*Discussions*

During the discussion session (#12), participants will be invited to comment on the presentations and share their own experiences and views. This session will be held in a written format through the chat box. In addition, a few participants will also be invited to prepare spoken interventions. The webinar will be closed with a closing remark (#13).

1. **Timeframe**

Registration to the Webinar will be open for participants four weeks starting on 6 May 2015 at 12:00 (Rome time), and will close two days before the event on 25 May 2015 at 12:00 (Rome time). The registrations will be processed by FAO.

The preparatory online discussion session will be held from Monday, 20 April to Friday, 8 May 2015. The discussions will be moderated by representatives of the CBD, FAO and OECD.

1. **Technical considerations**

FAO has a license on ‘Adobe Connect’, an online Conference Tool that will be used for hosting the Webinar. The presentations of the three organizations will be delivered from Rome (FAO), Montreal (CBD) and Paris (OECD). Due to the inconvenient local time during the Session 1 in Montreal, Canada for the CBD, the presentation by the CBD may be delivered by one of the other organizers during the Session 1. There will be a maximum of 100 participants limit for each session.

1. **Expected outcome and concrete outputs**

The outcomes of the online discussions, presentations and discussions will be synthesized in a report. In addition, a series of YouTube videos with recordings of the webinar will be published on the YouTube channel of the FAO GM Foods Platform.

*Last updated: 10 March 2015*

*Drafted by: Ward Hermans*

*Reviewed by: Masami Takeuchi, OECD and UNEP-CBD*