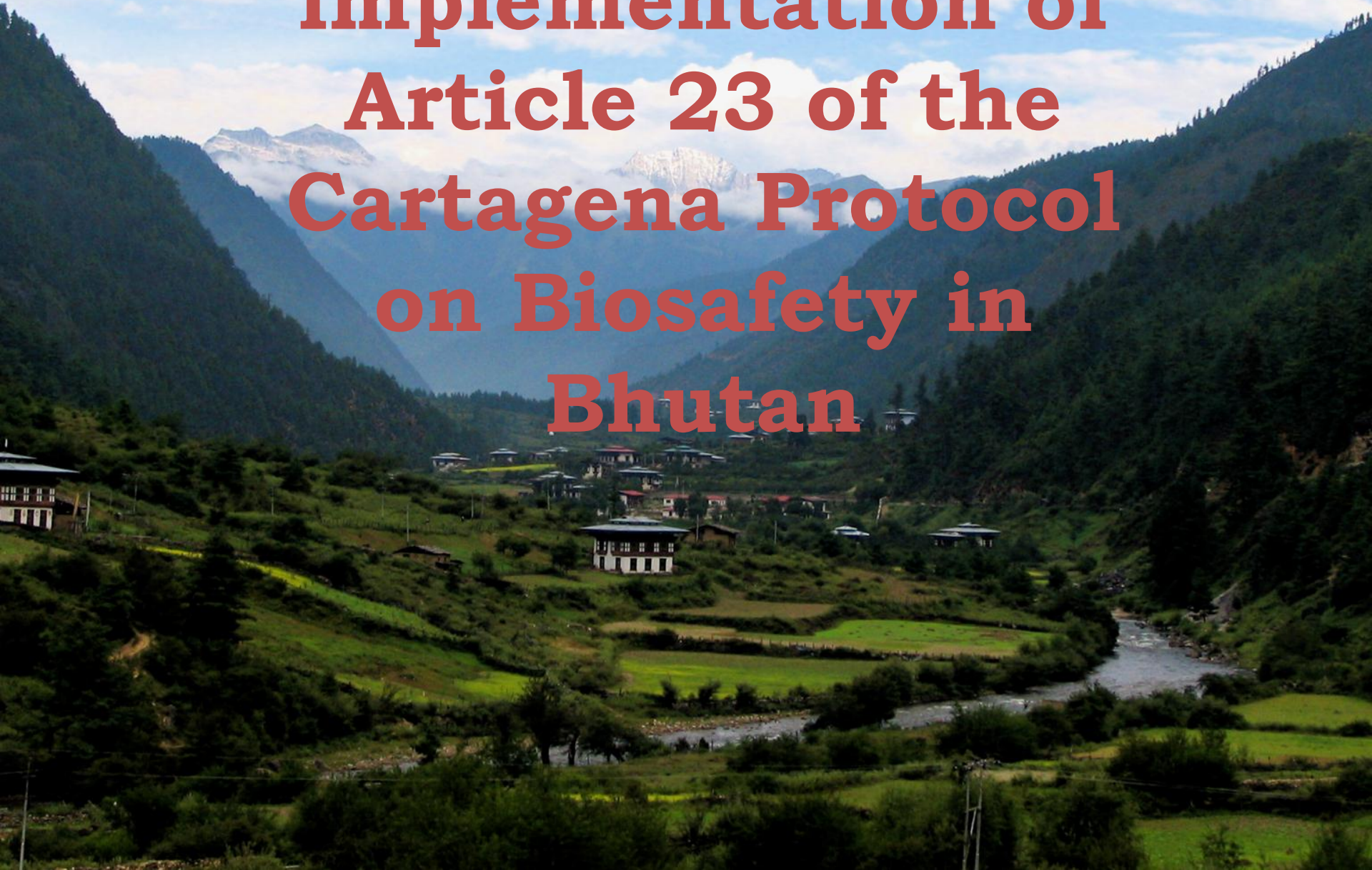


# **Status of implementation of Article 23 of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety in Bhutan**



## Current Situation

- **There is no domestic biotechnology activities in Bhutan**
- **Survey revealed that Bhutan imports 35 percent of its food from neighboring countries**
- **These imports could potentially contain GMO products**
- **Imports are both in bulk (maize and rice) and as processed and packaged foods**

# **Biosafety Regulatory Regimes**

- **The Seeds Act of Bhutan, 2000**
- **The Food Act of Bhutan, 2005**
- **The Plant Quarantine Act of Bhutan, 1993**
- **The Pesticides Act of Bhutan, 2000**
- **The Biodiversity Act of Bhutan, 2003**
- **The Livestock Act of Bhutan, 2000**
- **National Biosafety Framework of Bhutan, 2007**
- **National Environment Protection Act, 2007**
- **Constitution of the Kingdom of Bhutan, 2008**
- **Economic Development Policy, 2010**
- **Foreign Direct Investment Policy 2010**
- **Bhutan's National Access and Benefit Sharing (ABS) Policy (Draft stage)**
- **Biosafety Bill of Bhutan 2013 (draft stage)**

# **Legal Instruments concerning citizen's right to information on environment**

- **National Biosafety Framework of Bhutan, 2007**
- **National Environment Protection Act, 2007**
- **Constitution of the Kingdom of Bhutan, 2008**
- **Biosafety Bill of Bhutan 2013 (draft stage)**

# Public Awareness and Education Programs concerning Biosafety

## •Drafting of National Biosafety Bill of Bhutan:

*In consistent with the provision under Cartagena protocol on biosafety and the constitution of the kingdom of Bhutan, the biosafety bill of Bhutan has been drafted through the National Biosafety Framework Project and the bill has been submitted to the government for enactment. The Biosafety Bill will govern every aspects of GMO management in Bhutan. The bill was drafted after studying and harmonizing existing legislations on GMO.*

# Public Awareness and Education Programs concerning Biosafety

## **Public Awareness**

- *The Authority and all relevant stakeholders shall ensure public awareness of issues related to genetically modified organisms and products with genetically modified content.*

## **Access to Information**

- *The Authority shall coordinate with the National Environment Commission to ensure public access to non-confidential information relevant to genetically modified organisms and to the regulation and use of products with genetically modified content in the Kingdom.*

## **Education**

- *The Authority shall coordinate with the Ministry responsible for education to ensure that biosafety is appropriately integrated into the educational curricula in the Kingdom.*

## **Participation**

- *The Authority may provide opportunities for public participation in the process of making decisions concerning the import, export, and use of products with genetically modified content in the Kingdom.*

# Public Awareness and Education Programs concerning Biosafety

## •Survey questionnaire

*A quantitative survey has been conducted to assess the level of awareness among the public on GMOs and modern biotechnology (targeting five groups (farmers, importers, scientists basically government officials, consumers and policy makers)*

## Findings

- People have heard of GMOs but don't understand exactly what they are
- Unaware of the existing laws regarding GMOs among the public including importers and scientists
- Respondents feel that labelling should be mandatory.
- The majority of respondents were not unfavourable to the presence of GMOs in Bhutan but they thought that research should be developed and risk assessment should be conducted to determine a level of accessibility.
- Not only the public was unaware of GMOs but the institutions and decision makers also don't know about the situation.

# Public Awareness and Education Programs concerning Biosafety

- **Developing of awareness materials:**

*The project is in the process of developing various awareness materials such as video program, pamphlets, and brochures for creating awareness of GMO.*



# Programs in progress

## •**Establishment of Biotechnology Laboratory:**

*The biotechnology laboratory for testing GM content has been established and with the training of Laboratory Officials in GM detection, the lab has begun testing few food products for GM content.*

## •**Development of GMO database:**

*A database has been developed for BAFRA officials and for other stakeholders to use while implementing the biosafety regulations in Bhutan. The database contains the list of GMO products, the source of products, the events to look for and the list of GM products approved in other countries and so on.*

## **Programs in progress**

- **Training on Biosafety Clearing House (BCH):**

*Through the National Biosafety Framework Project, BAFRA Officials have been trained in exploring and using BCH.*

- **Training in the field of GMO detection, monitoring and identification:**

*With the support from an International Consultants for capacity building, the project is in the process of identifying various trainings required for BAFRA officials and stakeholders for carrying out GMO detection, monitoring, inspection and identification.*

A wide-angle landscape photograph of a mountain valley. In the foreground, a river flows through a lush green valley. A small village with several buildings is nestled in the middle ground. The background features steep, forested mountains and snow-capped peaks under a blue sky with scattered white clouds. The text "Thank you" is overlaid in the center of the image.

**Thank you**