

Comments of Republic of Korea

on the ‘Elements of a Framework for Conceptual Clarity on Socio-Economic Considerations’ contained in the annex to the report of the first meeting of the Ad Hoc Technical Expert Group on socio-economic consideration

1. General View

- Republic of Korea (ROK) strongly supports and is willing to take part in the activity of the Ad Hoc Technical Expert Group(AHTEG) which aims to contribute to the conceptual clarity on socio-economic considerations.
- ROK generally agree with the report of the first AHTEG including ‘Elements of a Framework for conceptual clarity on socio-economic considerations contained in the annex.
- However, ROK also recognizes that much more works are needed to make a progress on conceptual clarity.

- ROK expects that long-term, inclusive, scientific and rational approach to the discussion of Socio-Economic considerations would contribute to the reduction of conceptual gaps among parties.
- ROK not only acknowledges the existences of differences in fundamental cognitive frame but also respects the different economic stake with regard to the socio-economic considerations among parties.
- ROK also strongly opposes to the potential misuse of socio-economic considerations as unnecessary trade barrier.
- ROK also emphasizes the possibility that socio-economic considerations may contribute to the development of bio-industry such as automobile emission standards has done to that of auto-mobile industry.
- Therefore, ROK believes that the rational and integrative approach to the discussion of socio-economic considerations would bring benefits to all participants addressing conceptual differences among parties.
- For instance, ROK expects that the research exchange and experience sharing between LMOs exporter and importers with regard to socio-economic considerations would make a

critical contribution to the discussion among parties (and non-parties).

2. Specific Comments

○ General Principle 6: ‘Human health-related issues’

- ROK understands that there remains concerns over the long-term negative impact of LMOs for food to human health.

- ROK, however, strongly believes that ‘Risk Assessment’ is the appropriate mechanism to deal with long-term negative impact of LMOs for food to human health, which is much more in line with current LMOs regulatory regime.

- For instance, LMOs for food are subject to the re-approval process every ten years so that their long-term dietary effect should be assessed indirectly in ROK .

- In addition, it may cause confusion over the administrative coverage between ‘Risk Assessment’ and ‘Socio-Economic Considerations’ if human health-related issues are to be dealt with as part of ‘Socio-economic considerations.’

- Since human health-related issues can have serious implications to trade, they should be approached very carefully.

○ Suggestions for information gathering activity

- ROK supports the information gathering activities regarding socio-economic considerations by Secretariat according to paragraph 5 of BS-VII/13, which would complement the limitation of inherent top-down approach of AHTEG.

- In the same context, ROK would like to suggest that information gathering activity should more focus on the field-based researches which look at the farmer-level experiences in exporting country as well as the consumer-level experience in importing country.

- There have been many studies on socio-economic consideration based on 20 year LMO cultivation experience; yet there are critiques that few studies have looked at the farmer’s actual cultivation activities, resulting in the confusion over the impact of LMOs.

- For instance, while Coalition for GM Free India (2012) and Guillamue et al(2008) have pointed out different reasons behind high number of farmer suicide in India, both studies are

criticised for lack of research on real agricultural practice of farmers; the amount of pesticide or herbicide is very much influenced by farmer's cultivation practice which was not taken into account in many of studies(Freeman, 2012; Glover, 2010).

- Therefore, it would be very useful to collect micro level studies examining socio-economic consideration at farmers level and real LMOs cultivation field level, which would help to understand socio-economic considerations of LMOs in a more rational and systematic manner.

<Reference>

Coalition for a GM-Free India (2012) "10 Years of Bt Cotton: False Hype and Failed Promises Cotton farmers' crisis continues with crop failure and suicides"

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Freeman, J. (2012) "How do 'imagined farmers' negotiate actual risks? Biosafety trade-offs in Bt cotton production in Andhra Pradesh, India", The Journal of Political Ecology, vol. 19.

Glover, D. (2010) "Exploring the Resilience of Bt Cotton's "Pro-Poor" Success Story", Development and Change, vol. 41, no. 6, pp. 955-981.

Guillaume, P. et al. (2008) "Bt Cotton and Farmer Suicides in India: Reviewing the Evidence" IFPRI Discussion Paper 00808, October 2008