



XI Conference of Parties  
CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY  
HYDERABAD INDIA 2012

## Press Brief - Protocol on Biosafety

# Biosafety Clearing-House

## Background

The Protocol established the Biosafety Clearing-House (BCH) as a mechanism to facilitate the exchange of information on, and experience with, Living Modified Organisms (LMOs) and to assist Parties to implement the provisions of the Protocol. The BCH is accessible at: <http://bch.cbd.int/>.

## What has been done?

Since its first meeting, the Conference of the Parties Serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Biosafety Protocol (COP-MOP) identified the BCH as a core mechanism for the functioning and implementation of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety. It adopted the Modalities of Operation of the BCH which describe its core roles and characteristics, its administration and technical oversight (including the responsibilities of the Secretariat, BCH National Focal Points and relevant organizations) and the modalities for periodic reporting and review of the BCH's operations.

In subsequent meetings, the COP-MOP also adopted a Multi-year Programme of Work for the operation of the BCH; reviewed its implementation of the work programme and took additional decisions to improve the operations of the BCH. At its last meeting in Nagoya, Japan, the COP-MOP adopted a Strategic Plan for the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety for the period 2011-2020 in which information sharing and capacity-building regarding the BCH are set out as strategic objectives with defined expected outcomes and measurable indicators aimed at monitoring the progress toward the established objectives.

Today, the BCH is widely used all around the world as the main repository of information on living modified organisms (LMOs). It is translated into the six official UN languages and makes available information received by Parties, other Governments, International Organizations and other stakeholders groups on LMOs, decisions, risk assessments, national legislation, public participation, capacity building and scientific literature on biosafety. The BCH also provides tools for the analysis and graphic representation of its data. As of May 2012, the BCH housed more than 3,000 records officially submitted by Governments and approximately 11,000 records submitted by general BCH users.

The BCH is also a resource that facilitates the debate on LMOs. Since the last COP-MOP, twenty-seven online discussion groups, on eight different thematic areas of the Protocol, and eight real-time conferences, on two of these thematic areas, were launched and coordinated by the Secretariat. The discussion groups and real-time conferences were attended by a total of 1243 participants from all of the global regions. Some of the discussion groups and real-time conferences were conducted in official United Nations languages other than English. In addition to the forums, interaction among stakeholder groups on specific thematic areas is also facilitated by the 12 collaborative online portals that are currently active on the BCH.

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On the basis of the information contained in (a) the BCH, (b) the Second National Reports and (c) the preliminary assessment of the BCH using indicators of the Strategic Plan (COP-MOP/6/INF/22), relevant progress on the use of the BCH in recent years is quite evident. In particular, in comparison to the data reported to the previous COP-MOP, the total number of records, the percentage of decisions that are supported by an accompanying risk assessment summary and the total amount of traffic generated by the BCH, from both developed and developing countries, have all increased significantly.

Similarly, an unrefined comparison of the BCH's data with that from the database maintained by the Biotechnology Industry Organization (BIO) also reveals positive results in terms of the completeness of records registered in the BCH. As of May 2012, the total number of decisions on LMOs transboundary movements officially registered by Parties represented 93% of the total number of events registered in the BIO database.

Less positively, as of May 2012, 22% of the decisions on LMOs transboundary movements registered by Parties are still missing the required risk assessment summaries. However, in 2010 this figure was 46% and there has been therefore a significant improvement.

## What is expected at COP-MOP 6?

At its sixth meeting, the COP-MOP is expected, among other things, to consider the progress report on the programme of work for the operation of the BCH and to provide further guidance on the operation and activities of the BCH, which might include decisions for enhancing capacity-building in the use of the BCH.

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