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Learn More

- Program for Biosafety Systems **www.ifpri.org/pbs/pbs.asp**
- Agricultural Biotechnology Support Project II **www.absp2.cornell.edu**
- Biotechnology Information Center **www.bic.searca.org**
- Bureau of Plant Industry **www.bpi.da.gov.ph**
- Ecosystems Research and Development Bureau **www.erdb.denr.gov.ph**
- National Academy of Science and Technology **www.nast.dost.gov.ph**
- National Committee on Biosafety of the Philippines **www.ncbp.dost.gov.ph**
- National Institute of Molecular Biology and Biotechnology (BIOTECH) **www.uplb.edu.ph/biotech**

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PROGRAM FOR BIOSAFETY SYSTEMS

A partnership program for biosafety capacity development

PHILIPPINES

PBS Supports Biosafety Research and Ongoing Field Trials

The Philippines is one of the few developing countries with a functioning biosafety regulatory system. In 2002, it became the first country in Asia to commercialize a genetically modified (GM) crop, insect-resistant Bt corn, for planting by farmers. Since 2004, the Program for Biosafety Systems (PBS) has been working closely with key regulatory agencies and the National Committee on Biosafety of the Philippines to implement activities aimed at strengthening the country's biosafety system. These activities complement the efforts of other biosafety initiatives in Southeast Asia.

PBS-funded researchers collect data on weeds species composition, biomass, and diversity using the quadrant method in corn fields planted with herbicide-tolerant corn in Tigaon, Camarines Sur, Luzon, Philippines. (© 2007 Dr. Carmelita Villamor)

PBS is an IFPRI-managed program that supports our partner countries in Africa and Asia in the responsible development and safe use of agricultural biotechnology. PBS effectively addresses biosafety through an integrated program of research, capacity development, and outreach. PBS is funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID).

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Strategic Objectives for PBS/ Philippines, 2004–2008

- Help adopt and implement science-based policies that address post-commercialization requirements
- Improve the national biosafety system by supporting the implementation of the National Biosafety Framework
- Expand local capacity for risk assessment, risk management, and risk communication
- Support confined field trials (CFTs) of locally developed, GM products

Results

In cooperation with local organizations, PBS has provided support in the areas of biosafety capacity building, communications, policy development, and regulatory-related services.

Highlights

- Improved science-based policy development by helping scientists and researchers from the Philippines generate local biosafety data.
- Supported the implementation of the National Biosafety Framework, based on Executive Order 514.
- Helped set up a National Biosafety Clearing House, required by the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety.
- Supported the harmonization of biosafety-related regulations between the Department of Agriculture (DA) and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR).
- Helped provide biological and ecological baseline data for areas planted with GM corn.
- Contributed to ongoing field trials of ring spot virus-resistant papaya and delayed-ripening papaya.
- Strengthened the capacity of regulatory personnel, crop protection officers, and others in risk assessment, risk management, risk communication, and insect-resistance management.
- Sponsored activities to facilitate multi-location trials of GM crops, leading to better understanding of the technology among national institutions and the public.

Next Steps

- Ongoing implementation of Executive Order 514, including strengthening its operations manual, will be critical for a strong and functional national biosafety framework.
- The National Committee on Biosafety of the Philippines (NCBP) will continue to work with the DA and DENR to harmonize their regulations, facilitating field trials and eventual commercialization of GM crops.
- Collaborative trainings held by Institutional Biosafety Committees—established within organizations across the country—and the NCBP, as well as with international and regional partners, will prepare more institutions to develop their GM crops for commercialization.
- Local researchers, funded by PBS since 2004, have already established themselves as national biosafety spokespersons. Their ongoing research is critical to inform policymaking related to risk assessment.

Local Partners

The Biotechnology Coalition of the Philippines, Bureau of Plant Industry-Department of Agriculture, Ecosystems Research and Development Bureau-Department of Environment and Natural Resources, National Academy of Science and Technology, National Committee on Biosafety of the Philippines, the Philippine Council for Agriculture, Forestry, and Natural Resources Research and Development-Department of Science and Technology, University of the Philippines Los Baños.

International Partners

The Agricultural Biotechnology Support Project, the Biotechnology Information Center-Southeast Asian Regional Center for Graduate Study and Research in Agriculture, Calvin College, Donald Danforth Plant Science Center, International Rice Research Institute, and Michigan State University.