



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 in implementing the provisions of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety. The BCH is accessible at: <http://bch.cbd.int>.

What has been done?

At 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 Protocol. 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 its operations.

In subsequent meetings, the COP-MOP 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 fifth 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 progress toward the established objectives.

Today the BCH is widely used around the world as the main repository of information on LMOs. Translated into all six official UN languages, it makes available information received by Parties, other governments, international organizations and other stakeholder groups on LMOs, decisions, risk assessments, national legislation, public participation, capacity-building and scientific literature on biosafety.

The BCH also facilitates the debate on LMOs and has held a number of online discussion groups and real-time conferences.



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What news to expect in Pyeongchang?

At its seventh 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, an analysis of the relevant outcomes and indicators set out in the Strategic Plan for the Protocol and to provide further guidance on the operation and activities of the BCH, which might include decisions for Parties, and other governments to register in the BCH all their decisions on LMOs and related risk assessments as requested under the Protocol, with special emphasis on first intentional transboundary movements of LMOs for intentional introduction into the environment that are intended for field trials, as this category is currently underrepresented in the BCH.

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