



Convention on Biological Diversity

Distr.
GENERAL

UNEP/CBD/BS/WS-SEC/1/5
2 November 2011

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

WORKSHOP ON CAPACITY-BUILDING FOR RESEARCH
AND INFORMATION EXCHANGE ON SOCIO-ECONOMIC
IMPACTS OF LIVING MODIFIED ORGANISMS
New Delhi, India, 14-16 November 2011
Item 5 of the provisional agenda *

SYNTHESIS OF VIEWS ON NEXT STEPS REGARDING SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONSIDERATIONS

Note by the Executive Secretary

I. INTRODUCTION

1. In decision BS-V/3, the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety requested the Executive Secretary to convene regional online conferences on socio-economic considerations and a regionally balanced workshop on capacity-building for research and information exchange on socio-economic impacts of living modified organisms (LMOs). In paragraph 28 of the decision, the Parties requested the Executive Secretary to synthesize the outcomes of the regional online conferences and the workshop and submit a report to the Parties to the Protocol at their sixth meeting for consideration of further steps.
2. This document provides a synthesis of the views expressed during the online discussion groups and the regional online real-time conferences regarding the next steps in addressing the issue of socio-economic considerations, including how operational objective 1.7¹ of the Strategic Plan for the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety should be implemented and key issues for deliberation at the sixth meeting of the Parties to the Protocol in the context of socio-economic considerations.
3. The Strategic Plan for the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety for the period 2011-2020, adopted by the Parties at their fifth meeting (decision BS-V/16) includes five strategic objectives. These strategic objectives are further divided into operational objectives, each with a number of outcomes and indicators. Operational objective 1.7 of the Strategic Plan aims to, on the basis of research and information exchange, provide relevant guidance on socio-economic considerations that may be taken into account in reaching decisions on the import of living modified organisms. Details of operational objective 1.7 are presented in the annex to this document.

* UNEP/CBD/BS/WS-SEC/1/1

¹ http://bch.cbd.int/protocol/issues/cpb_stplan_txt.shtml#oo1_7.

/...

II. POINTS FOR FURTHER CONSIDERATION

4. The online discussion groups and real-time conferences included questions concerning issues for further discussion regarding socio-economic considerations. This included discussions on how operational objective 1.7 of the Strategic Plan should be implemented and key issues for discussion in the workshop and at the sixth meeting of the Parties to the Protocol. The views expressed by the participants fall under the following four themes:

- (a) Capacity-building;
- (b) An ad hoc technical experts group and development of guidance on socio-economic considerations;
- (c) Development of a conceptual framework; and
- (d) Other issues.

A. *Capacity-building*

5. A number of participants in the online real-time conferences identified capacity-building as a key issue that should be discussed further. Proposals regarding capacity-building needs and mechanisms to address them are synthesized in a note by the Executive Secretary (UNEP/CBD/BS/WS-SEC/1/4).

6. Representatives of Parties in the real-time conferences raised the following suggestions regarding capacity-building and operational objective 1.7 of the Strategic Plan:

(a) Operational objective 1.7 of the Strategic Plan may be implemented through convening regional workshops on socio-economic considerations;

(b) For Central and Eastern Europe (CEE), a specific topic for discussion is strengthening capacity-building activities on socio-economic considerations in the framework of Article 26 of the Protocol and operational objective 1.7 of the Strategic Plan.

B. *Ad hoc technical experts group and development of guidance on socio-economic considerations*

7. Proposals for the sixth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to establish an ad hoc technical expert group (AHTEG) on socio-economic considerations were made by a number of participants in the discussion groups and the regional online real-time conferences. A number of participants also suggested the development of guidance on socio-economic considerations and many identified that this work could be done by an AHTEG.

1. *Terms of reference for an AHTEG*

8. One representative of a Party in the English-language real-time conference for Africa stated that an AHTEG could develop guidelines on socio-economic considerations. Another Party representative in the conference suggested that the following four points should be addressed by an AHTEG:

(a) Possible elements of socio-economic considerations (in the context of Article 26 of the Protocol) and criteria that could assist in determining which socio-economic considerations countries may wish to include in their decision-making frameworks;

(b) Possible elements of socio-economic considerations that need to be monitored after the introduction of LMOs;

(c) Ways to properly integrate socio-economic considerations, including human health, into the process of risk assessment; and

(d) Ways in which socio-economic issues could be considered in the decision-making process on LMOs with a view to enabling the development of training for socio-economic considerations.

9. A representative of a Party in the Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) real-time conference suggested that the mandate of an AHTEG on socio-economic considerations should focus on establishing a conceptual and methodological guide for the inclusion of socio-economic considerations in the biosafety decision-making processes. She suggested that the specific terms of reference for the AHTEG could be defined either in the workshop or at meetings of the liaison group on capacity-building. She also suggested outlining key aspects for a conceptual framework on socio-economic considerations as one of the issues for discussion during the workshop and the sixth meeting of the Parties to the Protocol.

10. Another Party representative in the LAC real-time conference felt that it was a very good idea to consider elaborating the terms of reference for the eventual establishment of a “conceptual and methodological guide for the inclusion of socio-economic considerations”. He stated that the terms of reference should specify the intended scope of the framework and guidelines to be developed by an AHTEG. Another representative of a Party indicated that the mandate for the AHTEG should be to establish a conceptual framework and guidance, and to propose methodologies.

11. Another Party representative, also in the LAC real-time conference, stated that the AHTEG should: propose assessment methodology, conceptual and methodological developments and propose the scope of the issue in the framework of the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Protocol. She indicated that its work would result in practical support documents for assessments, such as manuals and guides, similar to the work of the AHTEG on risk assessment.

12. A representative of a Party in the Western Europe and Others Group (WEOG) and Central and Eastern European (CEE) real-time online conference suggested that a working group of experts in this field could develop criteria, common approaches and methodologies as a guideline for socio-economic considerations, which would be useful for developing countries and countries with economies in transition.

2. *Composition of an AHTEG*

13. A representative of a Party in the English-language real-time conference for Africa stated that the composition of an AHTEG must be regionally balanced.

14. A Party representative in the LAC real-time conference indicated that participation in an AHTEG should include farmers as well as indigenous groups. Another Party representative emphasized the importance of the participation of representatives from megadiverse countries in an AHTEG so that the outcomes of its work will respond effectively to the needs and realities of these countries. A representative of another Party agreed and noted that AHTEGs include representatives of Parties as well as representatives of non-Parties, civil society, industry, academia, indigenous groups, etc., as observers. The emphasis given to indigenous groups is due to the text of the Protocol and the Convention on Biological Diversity, which recognizes the intimate relationship of these groups with biological diversity. She noted that this does not, however, restrict participation in an AHTEG to only them, nor does it mean that only their needs are taken into account. In light of the information provided, an observer stated that an AHTEG would be a good initiative.

/...

3. Implementation of operational objective 1.7 of the Strategic Plan and the development of guidance

15. An observer in the Asia-Pacific real-time conference suggested that operational objective 1.7 of the Strategic Plan could be implemented through the formation of a body such as a regionally balanced open-ended working group or expert group on socio-economic considerations to develop further guidance on the issue. She explained that guidance could include developing a conceptual framework and identifying key parameters, leading to a roadmap. This approach could be complemented by creating a mechanism to facilitate research and information exchange, building on the socio-economics portal in the Biosafety Clearing-House (BCH), as well as providing access to relevant research.

16. A representative of a Party in the WEOG and CEE real-time conference also suggested that operational objective 1.7 of the Strategic Plan should be implemented through the development of guidelines on socio-economic considerations and ecosystems goods and services, guidelines on criteria and indicators for socio-economic considerations, and socio-economic considerations and trade, benefits and risks.

17. In the informal real-time discussion among French-language participants from Africa,² a Party representative emphasized the importance of training and materials, notably the work of AHTEGs and online conferences.

18. An observer in the Asia-Pacific real-time conference stated that the sixth meeting of the Parties to the Protocol will be in a position to bring together the various threads on socio-economic considerations that have been raised, and build on the work that has been carried out already. She suggested that the sixth meeting of the Parties to the Protocol could put the mechanisms in place (such as an expert group) for the development of guidance to assist Parties and capacity-building.

19. Participants in the Asia-Pacific real-time conference agreed that it would be appropriate for the sixth meeting of the Parties to the Protocol to establish such a mechanism. They noted that the outcome of the workshop would likely provide some ideas in this area.

20. Participants in the Asia-Pacific real-time conference also discussed the possibility of developing common guidelines or a standard template for applicants to provide information on the socio-economic impacts of LMOs. A representative of a Party expressed the view that a common template would be useful – countries would still be free to decide whether to apply all the variables but they would have an indication of the spectrum of issues that may be considered. A representative of another Party agreed, adding that there is a need to have some common minimum among countries, especially those sharing the same concerns. A representative of an observer organization also agreed that the role of an international forum would be to provide options to national leaders and policymakers. The representative of another observer organization added that any guidance should be flexible enough to be useful in different national contexts but should set some minimum standards.

21. A representative of a Party expressed the view that it would be difficult to draw clear guidance on socio-economic considerations for decision-making on LMOs given the variability among regions, types of farming and relevant timeframes. Another representative of the Party elaborated that the socio-economic effects of LMOs would be heterogeneous, and reflecting the result of a socio-economic assessment in the approval of a LMO at the national level might generate a national debate in his country.

² Only two participants were present for the French-language Africa real-time conference so an informal discussion was held among those who were present and the relevant information has been included here.

22. A Party representative agreed that lack of consensus would be a problem in drafting clear guidelines. Another Party representative added that clear guidelines would be a long-term objective as new issues are discovered.

23. A representative of a Party in the English-language real-time conference for Africa suggested that operational objective 1.7 of the Strategic Plan may be implemented through the preparation of guidelines.

C. Developing a conceptual framework

24. A representative of a Party in the WEOG and CEE real-time conference stated that the online discussion groups, the real-time conferences and the workshop have been a good starting point for identifying relevant issues on socio-economic considerations. She felt that more work is needed, however, and that the topic needs to be considered in a stepwise manner. She suggested that the first step would be exploring what might be included in the context of Article 26 of the Biosafety Protocol – what is it that we are talking about? After this has been explored, the discussion can move to questions of how these issues can be evaluated. This step will help develop guidance for those countries that choose to include socio-economic considerations in their national decision-making processes.

25. Another Party representative in the WEOG and CEE real-time conference suggested that one of the activities for the workshop could be to identify and discuss procedures for moving forward on the issue of socio-economic considerations. He felt that it is necessary to define a clear starting point and scope for any further discussion. He also stated that it would be interesting to draw a comparison between LMO risk assessments and socio-economic considerations. This would enable the identification of similarities and differences, which could inform future discussions.

26. The representative of a Party in the WEOG and CEE real-time conference made a number of suggestions on how to proceed. She said there is a need to examine the considerations that can be taken into account under paragraph 1 of Article 26 of the Biosafety Protocol and in line with the other international obligations of Parties. She suggested that it may be possible to group the different considerations to facilitate discussions. A further idea was assistance (perhaps in the form of guidelines) for framing the potential socio-economic considerations that Parties want to take into account, the objectives they wish to achieve, the criteria to be assessed in a way that enables the Parties to implement paragraph 1 of Article 26 of the Protocol while also complying with their other international obligations. She indicated that the framing should not be too precise, however, to avoid limiting Parties and to allow them to interpret the issue in light of their specific socio-economic and environmental situations. As a next step, she suggested looking at existing methodologies in different relevant disciplines and encouraging the development or adaptation of methodologies. All this should draw on experience with socio-economic considerations in the field of biosafety and beyond.

27. The representative of a Party in the WEOG and CEE real-time conference noted that after the workshop and in light of the conclusions of the process provided for in decision BS-V/3, the next steps for the implementation of operational objective 1.7 of the Strategic Plan and for the sixth meeting of the Parties of the Protocol will be clearer. He stated that, at present, additional inputs are necessary in order to have a common understanding of socio-economic considerations.

28. The representative of a non-Party in the WEOG and CEE real-time conference stated that national sovereignty, regional interests and conflicting stakeholder opinions will make designing any kind of guidelines a complicated process. He expressed the view that it is first necessary to develop a common understanding of socio-economic considerations before considering drafting guidance. The common understanding needs to address such questions as: who will be involved, how to weigh different factors and when in the process socio-economic considerations would be taken into account. Most importantly, the

/...

guidelines need to respect the objectives of the Protocol. He noted comments from others that incorporating socio-economic considerations in decision-making has an implied cost either through resources or actual financial costs and this needs to be made clear.

29. The representative of an observer organization in the WEOG and CEE real-time conference suggested that one possibility would be to define a set of characteristics of a functional biosafety system that incorporates socio-economic considerations. He identified potential attributes or characteristics such as: feasibility, protectiveness, cost and time effectiveness, contribution to national objectives, consistency with domestic, regional and international law, transparency and direct relationship to risk. He expressed the view that reaching a consensus on this will help evaluate options at the national and regional levels. Once this is done, he indicated it would then be possible to proceed to discuss the socio-economic impact dimensions that fall under a strict interpretation of paragraph 1 of Article 26 and those relevant to existing national and regional laws.

30. During the informal real-time discussion among French-language participants from Africa, the representative of an observer organization stated that operational objective 1.7 of the Strategic Plan must be implemented by:

(a) Identifying the socio-economic considerations that must be taken into account as part of an assessment;

(b) Instituting clear and precise mechanisms to ensure that socio-economic considerations are taken into account in decision-making, such as:

(i) The inclusion of socio-economic impacts in the procedures for risk assessment;

(ii) The creation of a specific body on impact assessment consisting of experts in the field;

(iii) Public consultations on socio-economic issues to ensure access to information and public participation prior to decision-making.

(c) Fostering information exchange through the BCH and developing research on the issue.

31. The representative of a Party in the LAC real-time conference emphasized that the first step is to define the scope of socio-economic considerations in the context of Article 26 of the Protocol because socio-economic considerations are very broad.

32. A Party representative in the LAC real-time conference agreed that it is not possible to begin discussions on methods related to socio-economic considerations until there is clarity on the parameters to advise. She stated that there is a definite need for a guiding conceptual framework, taking into account the experience gained and successes and failures, in addition to existing information and knowledge gaps in guidance on socio-economic considerations.

33. The representative of a Party in the LAC real-time conference inquired about statistics and bibliographic references that are available and that could serve as the basis for building a conceptual framework and guidance. The representative of another Party responded that there is a great deal of information on this but the limitation is that most of the information focuses on economic aspects and does not adequately address the social component of socio-economic considerations. Furthermore, she expressed the view that there is insufficient information regarding indigenous groups and centres of origin and genetic diversification. Another Party representative agreed that many existing studies do not give much weight to social issues but this is not necessarily the case for all economic studies.

34. Participants in the Asia-Pacific real-time conference also discussed the importance of conceptual clarity in order to develop guidance on socio-economic considerations.

35. It should also be noted that the idea of conceptual clarity was also raised in the context of capacity-building in paragraph 27 of the note by the Executive Secretary on the subject (UNEP/CBD/BS/WS-SEC/1/4).

D. Other issues

36. The representative of a Party in the WEOG and CEE real-time conference indicated that further discussion of the issue of the co-existence of GM and non-GM crops, from a socio-economics perspective, would be very useful. Relevant questions include: who will pay for the costs of co-existence? What legal framework should be used to define co-existence? How should co-existence be implemented in practice, for example, what spatial organization, what separation distances?

37. The representative of a Party in the LAC real-time conference identified a number of issues for discussion during the workshop and the sixth meeting of the Parties to the Protocol:

(a) Identification of key parameters to include in guidance on socio-economic considerations related to LMOs (not restricted to GM crops, but also other applications);

(b) Identification of relevant and specific parameters for: (i) countries that are centres of origin and genetic diversification; (ii) indigenous and local communities; and (iii) vulnerable and/or marginalized groups (e.g., rural youth and women, communities with health and chronic malnutrition problems);

(c) Parameters for transparent and active participation of the public and civil society in guidance on socio-economic considerations related to LMOs;

(d) Analysis of experience in the regulation and implementation of measures related to socio-economic considerations in environmental, biodiversity and biosafety areas.

38. The representative of another Party in the LAC real-time conference suggested that the sixth meeting of the Parties to the Protocol should consider mechanisms (such as indicators) that would allow for better decision-making, according to previous experiences of both Parties and regions.

39. In the informal real-time discussion among French-language participants from Africa, the representative of a Party identified risk assessment and risk management, keeping socio-economic considerations in mind, as a key issue for the region needing further discussion.

40. A representative of a Party in the WEOG and CEE real-time conference noted that the work on socio-economic considerations in the context of Article 26 is probably of interest to all Parties as this aspect of the Protocol has not been elaborated on yet. She noted that issues for discussion at the sixth meeting of the Parties to the Protocol would likely be clearer after the workshop and the workshop itself should also discuss suggestions for the sixth meeting of the Parties.

Annex

OPERATIONAL OBJECTIVE 1.7 OF THE STRATEGIC PLAN

Strategic Objective	Expected Impacts	Operational Objective	Outcomes	Indicators
<p>Focal area 1: Facilitating the establishment and further development of effective biosafety systems for the implementation of the Protocol</p> <p>To put in place further tools and guidance necessary to make the Protocol fully operational</p>	<p>Full implementation of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety by Parties</p> <p>Enhanced performance by Parties towards the attainment of the overarching objectives of conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity</p>	<p>1.7 Socio-economic considerations</p> <p>To, on the basis of research and information exchange, provide relevant guidance on socio-economic considerations that may be taken into account in reaching decisions on the import of LMOs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peer reviewed research relevant to socio-economic considerations, taking into account the modality of peer review as specified in section E, annex III to decision VIII/10 • Guidelines regarding socio-economic considerations of living modified organisms developed and used, as appropriate, by Parties • Socio-economic considerations applied, where appropriate, by Parties 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of peer-reviewed research papers published, made available and used by Parties in considering socio-economic impacts of LMOs • Number of Parties reporting on their approaches to taking socio-economic considerations into account • Number of Parties reporting on their experiences in taking socio-economic considerations into account in reaching decisions on import of LMOs • Number of Parties using guidelines on socio-economic considerations
