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CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES TO THE CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY SERVING AS THE MEETING OF THE PARTIES TO THE CARTAGENA PROTOCOL ON BIOSAFETY
Sixth meeting
Hyderabad, India, 1-5 October 2012
Item 16 of the provisional agenda*

SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONSIDERATIONS (ARTICLE 26)

Note by the Executive Secretary

I. INTRODUCTION

1. In their decision BS-IV/16, the Parties to the Protocol agreed to review socio-economic considerations, specifically paragraph 2 of Article 26 of the Protocol, at their sixth meeting based on information that may be provided through the second national reports.

2. In their decision BS-V/3, the Parties to the Protocol requested the Executive Secretary to convene regional online conferences to: (i) facilitate the exchange of views, information and experiences on socio-economic considerations on a regional basis; and (ii) identify possible issues for further consideration (paragraph 24). The decision also requested the Executive Secretary to convene, prior to the sixth meeting of the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Protocol (COP-MOP), a regionally-balanced workshop on capacity-building for research and information exchange on socio-economic impacts of living modified organisms with the following main objectives:

(a) Analysis of the capacity-building activities, needs and priorities regarding socio-economic considerations submitted to the Biosafety Clearing-House (BCH) by Parties and other Governments, and identification of options for cooperation in addressing those needs;

(b) Exchange and analysis of information on the use of socio-economic considerations in the context of Article 26 of the Protocol (paragraph 25).

3. The Executive Secretary was also requested to synthesize the outcomes of the online conference and workshop and submit a report to the sixth meeting of the Parties for consideration of further steps (paragraph 28).

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4. Accordingly, section II of the current document synthesizes information on socio-economic considerations from the second national reports while section III summarizes the process by which the regional online conferences and the workshop were convened and highlights the outcomes. Section IV suggests elements for a draft decision.

II. SYNTHESIS OF INFORMATION FROM THE SECOND NATIONAL REPORTS

5. Question 176 in the reporting format for the second national reports addressed whether countries, if they have taken a decision on import, have ever taken into account socio-economic considerations arising from the impact of the living modified organism (LMO) on the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity. The analysis of the information in the second national reports (document UNEP/CBD/BS/COP-MOP/6/16) breaks down the responses to this question as follows:

- 21 Parties out of the 72 who responded to this question (29%) reported *yes*, when taking a decision on import, they have taken into account socio-economic considerations arising from the impact of the LMO on the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity;

- 11 Parties (15% of the respondents to this question) reported doing so *only in some cases*;

- 40 Parties (56% of the respondents to this question) reported *no*, they have not taken socio-economic considerations into account;

- The percentages of respondents within the different regions reporting *yes* are as follows: 33% of the respondents in Africa, 14% in Asia-Pacific, 10% in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE), 14% in the Group of Latin American and the Caribbean countries (GRULAC) and 29% in the Western Europe and Others Group (WEOG).

6. Question 177 asked whether countries have cooperated with other Parties on research and information exchange on any socio-economic impacts of LMOs. The analysis of the information in the second national reports summarizes the responses as follows:

- 10 Parties of the 143 respondents to this question (7%) reported that *yes*, they have cooperated with other Parties on research and information exchange on any socio-economic impacts of LMOs;

- 39 Parties (27% of the respondents to this question) reported doing so *to a limited extent*; and

- 94 Parties (66% of the respondents to this question) reported *no*, they have not cooperated with other Parties in this regard;

- The percentages of respondents within the different regions which reported having cooperated are as follows: 4% of the respondents in Africa, 0% in Asia-Pacific, 5% in CEE, 0% in GRULAC and 37% in WEOG.

7. Question 178 in the reporting format provided respondents with space to provide further details on the implementation of Article 26 in their country. In response, a few countries indicated that they have not taken decisions on import. Some stated that their regulatory frameworks include socio-economic considerations while others noted that their frameworks do not include socio-economic considerations. A few developing countries noted their intention to include socio-economic considerations in their national

biosafety frameworks or regulatory systems once these are developed and put in place. Some also stated that they require capacity-building in order to be able to include socio-economic considerations in their decision-making on LMOs. Certain countries stated that they have experience taking socio-economic considerations into account in their decision-making on LMOs, including through the development of co-existence measures. A number of countries indicated that they have been involved in research and studies on the socio-economic impacts of LMOs.

III. SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN IN RESPONSE TO THE RELEVANT PARAGRAPHS OF DECISION BS-V/3 AND THEIR OUTCOMES

8. The Secretariat initiated a three-step process to implement the requests regarding socio-economic considerations in decision BS-V/3. These steps and the timeline for their implementation were outlined in notification 2011-016 issued on 20 January 2011.[1] Three activities were foreseen to implement the requests on socio-economic considerations from decision BS-V/3:

(a) Online discussion groups on socio-economic considerations;

(b) Real-time online regional conferences on socio-economic considerations; and

(c) A workshop on capacity-building for research and information exchange on socio-economic impacts of LMOs.

9. An online Portal on Socio-Economic Considerations was created in the BCH to host the online activities and provide information on the process.[2]

10. The process and outcomes of each of these steps is outlined below.

Step 1: Online discussion groups

11. The first step was a series of online discussion groups on socio-economic considerations which ran from 21 March to 8 May 2011 through the BCH. The purpose of the online discussion groups was to:

(a) Facilitate a global exchange of information and experiences on socio-economic considerations;

(b) Develop a clearer understanding of the different perspectives on the issue; and

(c) Identify issues for further discussion during the regional online real-time conferences and the workshop.

12. The themes and guiding questions for the online discussions are presented in table 1 below.

[1] Reference: SCBD/BS/CG/KG/jh/74729, online: http://www.cbd.int/doc/notifications/2011/ntf-2011-016-bs-en.pdf.

[2] http://bch.cbd.int/onlineconferences/portal_art26/se_main.shtml.

Table 1. Themes and guiding questions for the online discussions on socio-economic considerations

Theme	Guiding question(s)
Theme 1: Socio-economic considerations in the context of Article 26 of the Biosafety Protocol	• What are the socio-economic considerations that Parties may take into account in the context of Article 26 of the Biosafety Protocol?
Theme 2: Socio-economic considerations and other international obligations	• What other international obligations may Parties need to follow when taking socio-economic considerations into account in their decision-making on living modified organisms?
Theme 3: Experiences and lessons learned from taking socio-economic considerations into account in decision-making on LMOs	• What methods have been used to assess the possible socio-economic impacts of living modified organisms? • What experience has been gained to date with methods for assessing socio-economic impacts? • How have socio-economic assessments been integrated into the decision-making process and what lessons have been learned?
Theme 4: Capacity-building for assessing possible socio-economic impacts and evaluating assessments	• What are the main capacity-building needs of countries regarding the assessment of socio-economic considerations? • What are the main capacity-building needs regarding the evaluation of assessments and their integration into a decision on the import of an LMO? • How might these needs be addressed, taking into account the overall capacity-building framework for biosafety?
Theme 5: Target groups for capacity-building on socio-economic considerations	• Which should be the main target groups for capacity-building on socio-economic considerations (e.g. policy-makers, decision-makers, regulators, technical personnel such as risk or impact assessors, other professionals, interest groups, etc.)?
Theme 6: Capacity-building initiatives related to socio-economic considerations	• What capacity-building initiatives relating to socio-economic considerations in the context of the Biosafety Protocol, living modified organisms or beyond have been undertaken or are currently being implemented?

Theme 7: Open forum for other issues and questions	• What other relevant issues should be discussed in the online regional conferences and the workshop that are to be held in accordance with decision BS-V/3?

13. Interested participants were required to be nominated in order to post messages in the online discussion groups. Ninety-three participants were registered to take part. Of these, 36 participants posted over 230 messages during the seven weeks of the discussion groups. All the messages are available online: http://bch.cbd.int/onlineconferences/portal_art26/se_forum_archive.shtml.

Step 2: Regional online real-time conferences

14. The next step was a series of regional online real-time conferences held in June and July 2011. Five such conferences were organized: two for Africa (one in English and one in French), one for WEOG and CEE, one for Latin America and the Caribbean (in Spanish) and one for Asia and the Pacific. Over 60 participants took part in the real-time conferences as country representatives, observers or guests.

15. Discussions in the real-time conferences focused on three areas, each with a number of guiding questions. These are summarized in table 2.

Table 2. Topics and guiding questions for regional online real-time conferences on socio-economic considerations

Topic	Guiding questions
National experiences with socio-economic considerations in biosafety decision-making	• Has your country included provisions on socio-economic considerations in its national biosafety framework, biosafety policy, legislation and/or regulations? If yes, briefly describe the relevant provisions. • What experience does your country have with implementing socio-economic considerations in biosafety decision-making? (For example, has your country taken socio-economic considerations into account in making a decision on a specific LMO or conducted a general technology assessment?) • What have been the main challenges and obstacles to taking socio-economic considerations into account in decision-making? How have these been addressed? • Does your country have experience with socio-economic considerations in other sectors besides biosafety? (For example, have socio-economic considerations been included

	in decision-making processes for other products such as pharmaceuticals or in planning and decision-making for development projects using methodologies such as social impact assessments or strategic environmental assessment?)
Considerations driving the inclusion of socio-economic issues in biosafety decision-making	• What goals does your country wish to achieve by taking socio-economic considerations into account in decision-making on LMOs? • What socio-economic factors would need to be assessed to achieve the goals identified? • What capacity-building does your country require to meet the goals identified?
Other issues	• How should operational objective 1.7 of the Strategic Plan for the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety for the Period 2011-2020 be implemented? The operational objective is "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". • What are some key issues for your region that should be discussed during the workshop on socio-economic considerations? • What are some key issues for your region that should be discussed at COP-MOP-6 in the context of socio-economic considerations?

16. A number of documents were made available for the regional online real-time conferences. These included a summary of submissions made (further to paragraph 23 of decision BS-V/3) by Parties, other Governments and relevant organizations of relevant information on socio-economic considerations, including guidance material and case-studies on, *inter alia*, institutional arrangements and best practices (document UNEP/CBD/BS/REGCONF-SEC/1/INF/1).[3]

17. Other documents that were made available for the real-time conferences included:

- The summary report on the survey on the application of and experience in the use of socio-economic considerations in decision-making on living modified organisms, which had been

[3] The full text of the submissions was made available through the resources section of the Portal on Socio-Economic Considerations: http://bch.cbd.int/protocol/cpb_art26/resources.shtml.

submitted to the fifth meeting of the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety as an information document (document UNEP/CBD/BS/COP-MOP/5/INF/10);

- The document on socio-economic considerations, specifically on paragraph 2 of Article 26, that had been prepared for the fourth meeting of the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety (document UNEP/CBD/BS/COP-MOP/4/15); and

- The compilation of views and case-studies concerning socio-economic impacts of living modified organisms that had been prepared for the fourth meeting of the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety (document UNEP/CBD/BS/COP-MOP/4/INF/1).

18. The complete transcripts from the real-time conferences are available online via http://bch.cbd.int/onlineconferences/portal_art26/se_realtime_about.shtml.

Step 3: Workshop on Capacity-Building for Research and Information Exchange on Socio-Economic Impacts of Living Modified Organisms

19. Following the generous financial support from the Government of Norway and the kind offer to host by the Government of India, the Workshop on Capacity-building for Research and Information Exchange on Socio-Economic Impacts of Living Modified Organisms was held in New Delhi from 14 to 16 November 2011.

20. In accordance with paragraph 27 of decision BS-V/3, the Liaison Group on Capacity-Building for Biosafety at its eighth meeting, held in Chisinau, Republic of Moldova in April 2011, gave advice to the Executive Secretary on the organization of the workshop. The suggestions of the Liaison Group regarding the organization of the workshop can be found in the report of its eighth meeting.[4]

21. The agenda for the workshop included three substantive items. The first was on the exchange and analysis of information on socio-economic considerations. Two synthesis documents were prepared to facilitate the discussions under this item: one on experiences with socio-economic considerations in decision-making in areas other than biosafety as described during the real-time conferences (UNEP/CBD/BS/WS-SEC/1/2);[5] and the other on national experiences with socio-economic considerations in decision-making on LMOs as provided through submissions, the online discussion groups and the regional online real-time conferences (UNEP/CBD/BS/WS-SEC/1/3).[6]

22. The first substantive agenda item began with two presentations on the application of socio-economic assessments in fields other than biosafety. One presentation considered socio-economic considerations in environmental decision-making in India while the other addressed topics, methods and ongoing work on socio-economic impact evaluation by the International Centre for Tropical Agriculture. There were also presentations of case-studies from Bolivia, France, India and Norway on the inclusion of socio-economic considerations in decision-making on LMOs. The workshop participants then discussed areas in their countries where socio-economic considerations are taken into account in decision-making, how these areas might help inform the incorporation of socio-economic considerations into decision-

[4] Document UNEP/CBD/BS/LG-CB/8/2, available online at: http://www.cbd.int/doc/?meeting=BSLGCB-08.

[5] The document is available online at: http://www.cbd.int/doc/meetings/bs/bsws-sec-01/official/bsws-sec-01-02-en.pdf.

[6] The document is available online at: http://www.cbd.int/doc/meetings/bs/bsws-sec-01/official/bsws-sec-01-03-en.pdf.

making on LMOs, and how the application of socio-economic considerations in other areas may relate to biosafety.

23. The second substantive agenda item was on capacity-building activities, needs and priorities regarding socio-economic considerations. Paragraph 22 of decision BS-V/3 invited Parties and other Governments to submit to the BCH their capacity-building needs and priorities regarding socio-economic considerations. A number of Parties included information on their capacity-building needs in the submissions they made in response to notification 2011-016. The capacity-building needs and priorities database in the BCH[7] also contained information regarding socio-economic considerations. A document was prepared for the workshop synthesizing the information from the submissions and the BCH as well as from the 2009 online survey on the application of and experience in the use of socio-economic considerations in decision-making on LMOs and postings during the online discussion groups and real-time conferences on socio-economic considerations (document UNEP/CBD/BS/WS-SEC/1/4).[8]

24. During the workshop, a presentation was given by the Chair of the Coordination Meeting for Governments and Organizations Implementing and/or Funding Biosafety Capacity-building Activities. A representative of the Secretariat gave a presentation on the survey on the application of and experience in the use of socio-economic considerations in decision-making on LMOs. Representatives from two organizations involved in capacity-building projects on socio-economic considerations and living modified organisms also gave presentations on their experiences. The workshop participants then discussed criteria that could be used to prioritize capacity-building needs and also engaged in an exercise to prioritize capacity-building needs from the perspective of their region and to identify options for cooperation to meet those needs. They also discussed how to develop conceptual clarity on socio-economic considerations in decision-making on LMOs.

25. All the presentations from the workshop are available on the Portal on Socio-Economic Considerations: http://bch.cbd.int/onlineconferences/portal_art26/se_workshop_about.shtml.

26. The third substantive agenda item was consideration of the conclusions of the workshop. To facilitate discussions under this agenda item, a document was prepared synthesizing views from the online discussion groups and the regional online real-time conferences regarding next steps to be taken on socio-economic considerations, including how operational objective 1.7 of the Strategic Plan should be implemented and key issues for deliberation at the sixth meeting of the Parties in the context of socio-economic considerations (document UNEP/CBD/BS/WS-SEC/1/5).[9]

27. During the workshop, participants expressed their views on next steps that should be taken on socio-economic considerations at the national, regional and international levels and how to implement operational objective 1.7 of the Strategic Plan. Based on the points raised over the course of the workshop, the participants reviewed a number of conclusions and suggestions for next steps, which were then annexed to the workshop report. These conclusions and suggestions form the basis of the suggested elements for a draft decision of section IV of this document below. The full report of the workshop has been made available as information document UNEP/CBD/BS/COP-MOP/6/INF/13.

[7] http://bch.cbd.int/database/activities/.

[8] The document is available online at: http://www.cbd.int/doc/meetings/bs/bsws-sec-01/official/bsws-sec-01-04-en.pdf.

[9] The document is available online at: http://www.cbd.int/doc/meetings/bs/bsws-sec-01/official/bsws-sec-01-05-en.pdf.

IV. SUGGESTED ELEMENTS FOR A DRAFT DECISION

28. The sixth meeting of the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety may wish to consider the following:

Welcoming the conclusions and suggestions for next steps from the Workshop on Capacity-building for Research and Information Exchange on Socio-economic Impacts of Living Modified Organisms;

Noting that paragraph 1 of Article 26 of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety is not mandatory but *recognizing* the need expressed by several Parties for further guidance in order to implement their policy choice to include socio-economic considerations in their decision-making on living modified organisms;

(a) Encourage Parties, other Governments and relevant organizations to continue to:

(i) Undertake research and studies on the socio-economic impacts of living modified organisms in order to fill knowledge gaps and identify the specific socio-economic issues related to living modified organisms;

(ii) Share and exchange, through the Biosafety Clearing-House, information on their research, research methods and experiences in taking socio-economic impacts of living modified organisms into account;

(b) Establish an *ad hoc* technical experts group to continue the work on socio-economic considerations by undertaking the following tasks:

(i) Developing conceptual clarity on socio-economic considerations;

(ii) Compiling and reviewing information on socio-economic impacts of living modified organisms, including information available on specific cases;

(iii) Developing guidelines on socio-economic considerations in the context of operational objective 1.7 of the Strategic Plan (decision BS-V/16), that, among other things, identify key questions to be answered and provide minimum common elements that could be used in considering socio-economic impacts of living modified organisms. The guidelines should provide flexibility to take into account the situations in different countries and be supplemented by more specific information through case-studies;

(c) Request the Executive Secretary to, in the context of paragraph (b)(ii) above and on the basis of information on socio-economic considerations made available to the Secretariat, undertake a stock-taking exercise of:

(i) Existing institutional frameworks, legislation and policies with provisions on socio-economic considerations;

(ii) Capacity-building activities related to biosafety and socio-economic considerations;

(iii) Existing expertise;

(iv) Other policy initiatives concerning social and economic impact assessments, to develop a global overview.
