

PROCEEDINGS
OF THE JOINT INCEPTION WORKSHOPS
CZECH AND SLOVAK REPUBLICS

**PROJECT UNEP/GEF: SUPPORT FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DRAFT
NATIONAL BIOSAFETY FRAMEWORK**

November 8, 2006

**PROJECT UNEP/GEF: BUILDING CAPACITY FOR EFFECTIVE PARTICIPATION
IN THE BIOSAFETY CLEARING HOUSE**

November 9, 2006

PRAGUE

CENIA, Kodaňská 10, Prague 10

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PROJECT UNEP/GEF: SUPPORT FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DRAFT
NATIONAL BIOSAFETY FRAMEWORK FOR THE CZECH REPUBLIC

INCEPTION WORKSHOP

November 8, 2006

Prague

CENIA, Kodaňská 10, Prague 10

AGENDA

8:30 – 9:00	Registration of participants
9:00 – 9:50	Introduction <i>David Duthie, Task Manager, UNEP-GEF Biosafety Unit</i> <i>Michal Pastvinský, Director, Development and Projects Coordination Department, Ministry of the Environment of the Czech Republic</i> <i>Igor Ferenčík, Director, Biosafety Department, Ministry of the Environment of the Slovak Republic</i>
9:50 – 10:10	UNEP-GEF Biosafety Implementation Projects: Results, Opportunities, Perspectives <i>David Duthie - Task Manager, UNEP-GEF Biosafety Unit</i>
10:10 - 10:30	Break Chair: Jan Káš
10:30 -10:50	UNEP-GEF Project Support for the Implementation of the Draft National Biosafety Framework for the Czech Republic – Scope and Objectives <i>Milena Roudná – National Project Coordinator</i>
10:50-11:10	UNEP-GEF Project Support for the Implementation of the Draft National Biosafety Framework for the Slovak Republic – Scope and Objectives <i>Danka Valková – National Project Coordinator, Comenius University, Bratislava</i>
11:10 -11:30	Discussion
11:30 - 12:00	National Biosafety Framework of Slovakia – Present Status (biosafety policy, regulatory and administrative regime, monitoring and control system) <i>Igor Ferenčík, Ministry of the Environment of the Slovak Republic</i>
12:00 – 13:30	Lunch break Chair: Danka Válková
13:30 -14:20	National Biosafety Framework of the Czech Republic – Present Status (biosafety policy, regulatory and administrative regime) <i>Zuzana Doubková, Ministry of the Environment of the Czech Republic</i> National Biosafety Framework of the Czech Republic – Present Status (monitoring and enforcement, laboratory testing) <i>Jan Káš, Institute of Chemical Technology, Technical University, Prague</i> Co-presentations <i>Marie Čeřovská, Ministry of Agriculture of the Czech Republic, Prague</i> <i>Jaroslava Ovesná, Research Institute of Crop Production, Prague</i>

14:20-14:40	System of Environmental Education in the Czech Republic and Biosafety Issues <i>Karel Jech, Ministry of the Environment of the Czech Republic (due to absence presented by: Milena Roudná)</i>
14:40-15:10	Coffee break
15:10 -16:30	Discussion
16:30 – 17:00	Summary and proposals for regional cooperation in discussed areas
18:00	Dinner

ABSTRACTS

Overview of UNEP-GEF Capacity Building Support for Biosafety

David Duthie

Introduction

The UNEP-GEF Biosafety Unit works in collaboration with many international, regional, and national partners. The Unit's portfolio under the GEF Initial Strategy—currently valued at more than US\$ 70 million — consists of:

- helping up to 130 countries to develop National Biosafety Frameworks (NBFs) (34.1 M US\$ from GEF plus 13.1 M US\$ in cofinancing),
- implementing NBFs in a set of 8 demonstration countries, (4.8 M US\$ from GEF plus 1.2M US\$ in cofinancing), and
- ensuring widespread access to the Biosafety Clearing-House for up to 139 countries (13.5 M US\$ from GEF plus 1.4 M US\$ in cofinancing).

Building on UNEP's ten-year track in the emerging field of biosafety, the UNEP-GEF Biosafety Unit has taken a leading role in implementing the GEF Biosafety Strategy through three key activities.

All these projects are enabling some 140 developing and transition countries to develop a basic capacity in dealing with biosafety issues. These activities are bringing the Cartagena Protocol to life and yielding important lessons in how to improve biosafety systems everywhere.

The UNEP-GEF global NBF Development Project started in June 2001 and will finish December 2007. Each national project has an average duration of around 30 months. As of October 2006, 76 countries have completed draft NBFs (14 from Central and Eastern Europe - CEE , 25 from Africa, 22 from Asia and the Pacific, and 15 from Latin America and the Caribbean). In the CEE region, the following countries are still working on their NBF: Azerbaijan, Bosnia & Herzegovina*, and Ukraine.

The UNEP-GEF project “Building Capacity for Effective Participation in the Biosafety Clearing House (BCH) of the Cartagena Protocol” started in March 2004 and will run until June 2008. Each participating country has a budget of up to 50,000 US \$ to set up the BCH and run training workshops. To date, 100 Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) have been signed or are under negotiation. With GEF support, the Biosafety Unit helps countries both to develop national BCH components and access and use the resources available through the global BCH. The project provides advice, training, and computer hardware and software. The BCH project uses regional advisers as its main capacity building input.

UNEP-GEF support for NBF Implementation Projects

The goal of an implementation project is to enable a country to convert its draft NBF into a workable, effective, and transparent regulatory regime, in line with national priorities and international obligations. It also assists countries to create mechanisms for handling all aspects of biosafety.

During the GEF “Demonstration” Implementation Phase, 12 countries originally in the GEF Pilot Biosafety Project and therefore not eligible to join NBF Development project have undertaken projects. The countries are: Bulgaria, Cameroon, China, Cuba, Kenya, Namibia, Poland, Uganda with UNEP (plus Columbia, India, Malaysia and Mexico with UNDP/WB). Each project had a budget of around US\$ 0.75 mn, and had a planned duration of 3 years but in fact took closer to 4 years to complete.

The 8 UNEP managed projects started in September 2002 and all finished or are finishing in 2006.

During the GEF “Interim Approach” phase, an additional 11 implementation projects for priority countries have been approved from amongst the remaining pilot phase countries and early Development project finishers. The countries are: Cambodia, Czech Republic, Egypt, Estonia, Lithuania, Mauritius, Moldova, Slovak Republic; Tanzania, Tunisia, and Vietnam.

No more NBF implementation projects can be approved until a new GEF biosafety strategy is agreed (December 2006). From the CEE region, the following countries have expressed an interest in developing an NBF implementation project with UNEP: Albania, Armenia, Belarus, Croatia, Georgia*, Latvia, Macedonia, Romania, Serbia (Montenegro), and Turkey.

What are the main achievements of an NBF Implementation Project?

By the end of an NBF implementation project, participating countries should have:

- *A fully-operational NBF consistent with CPB and other international obligations and national laws
- *Biosafety integrated into national plans and strategies (policies)
- *Laws enacted to meet institutional and administrative requirements
- *Interim measures in place, where necessary
- *Ability to make science-based decisions on LMOs/GMOs
- *Increased human resource capacities
- *Enhanced capacities in laboratory facilities
- *Increased public awareness
- *Greater coordination among relevant stakeholders
- *Sustained capacity for operations

What are the challenges for NBF implementation?

- *The need for Continuous ‘updating’ of policy makers
- * The need for Harmonization with evolving international obligations and/or EU Regulations
- *Enhancing public awareness
- *Active public participation in decision-making
- *Maintaining built capacity.

Support for the Implementation of the Draft National Biosafety Framework for the Czech Republic

Milena Roudná

The UNEP/GEF project represents the implementation phase of the project “Development of the National Biosafety Framework for Czech Republic” (2002 – 2004), which assessed the existing national capacity and role of responsible bodies. The new project (2006 – 2010) aims to assist in implementation of adopted measures within the biosafety framework in the country. The Ministry of the Environment will serve as the National Executing Agency. National Coordinating Committee will assist in coordination of scheduled activities. It consists of representatives of authorities and institutions responsible for biosafety policy, regulations and monitoring and other important stakeholders.

The following implementing activities will focus on five components of the National Biosafety Framework:

Biosafety Policy

- Meetings with authorities to reflect the biosafety issues in important strategic documents.
- Discussions with experts and stakeholders on identified problems.
- Surveys of new information to be used as background documents for Biosafety Strategy and related political documents.
- Drafting and amending strategic and policy documents.

Regulatory regime

- Surveys of needs to amend existing national biosafety legislation in line with international commitments of the CR.
- Participation in international meetings on biosafety regulatory principles.
- Two national meetings on implementation of CPB with participation of regional experts.
- Drafting amendments of relevant Acts and Decrees.
- Meetings on new commitments following the new regulatory amendments.

Handling requests for permits

- Technical equipment (software, hardware) for improvement of administrative system.
- Measures to facilitate submission of requests and consequently the administration on dossiers.
- Improve conditions for risk assessment.
- Regular meetings of the Czech Commission on GMOs.
- Enhance information and technical background for the Czech Commission on GMOs.
- Revision of existing procedures and practice in the light of latest developments and presentation on the website.
- Training on ERA procedures.
- National guidelines on ERA and their presentation at meetings and workshops.

Monitoring of environmental effects and enforcement

- Development of methodology and guidelines for sampling and detection of GMOs.
- Training of inspection personnel on sampling and handling with samples.
- Workshop on monitoring of possible GMOs release into the environment.
- Equipment of designated laboratories and training of personnel in line with required standards.
- Monitoring of GMOs and their possible effects on the environment and health carried out by the authorized state institutions.
- Training on emergency response.

Public information, participation, awareness

- Workshops for the public and schools to raise awareness of biosafety related issues.
- Disseminate information through media (newspapers, magazines, special publications) and website.

- Promote education on biosafety at schools.
- Publications on biosafety and related issues for decision-makers, experts, public and schools.
- Meeting of the Czech Commission on GMOs open for the public once a year.
- Project final workshop.

Support for Implementation of the National Biosafety Framework for Slovak Republic

Danka Valková

The presentation introduced the UNEP-GEF Medium Sized Project: Support for the Implementation of the National Biosafety Framework for the Slovak Republic. The project is divided into five components: A - National Biosafety Policy; B – Regulatory Regime; C – Systems for Request Handling and Risk Assessment; D – Monitoring and Follow-up System; E – Public Awareness, Education and Information. All five components were characterized well by their objectives, proposed outcomes and planned activities. Basically the Logframe Matrix of the project has been presented there.

For the component A, biosafety will be integrated into the relevant state documents e.g. National Biosafety and Biotechnology Policy and National Development Strategy. For this purpose two governmental meeting with the main stakeholders are planned to create the intersectoral plans and programmes for the national policy and strategy development in line with the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety (CPB), other international obligations and national development priorities.

For the component B, Slovakia will review its current GMO/LMO legislation and will update the regulatory regime in line with the CPB, EU legislation and other international agreements. For this purpose the current biosafety legislation will be amended or a new Act will be adopted before 2010 together with decree and necessary secondary legislation. Also the guidelines for governmental officers and public for interpreting and implementing the biosafety acts will be published.

For the component C, the National Coordination Centre for Biosafety will be in place to coordinate the fully operational administrative system together with follow-up and education systems. Two consultations will be held for competent authorities and three for biosafety officers, the guidelines for request handling and risk assessment and management will be published.

For the component D, the National Reference Laboratory will be functionally equipped and accredited and methodologies for monitoring and follow-up activities will be in place. The manual on new methods of LMO detection and identification will be published and two trainings for control bodies will be held on sampling, detection, identification and interpretation of the results obtained.

As to component E, an action plan on public education and participation in decision-making process will be developed and adopted. In collaboration with the Faculty of Natural Sciences of the Comenius University, Bratislava, that is granted for GMO education by the support of ESF, two informational workshops for broad public with the main stakeholders and NGOs will be organized. TV and radio broadcasts on biosafety are planned and national GMO web page will be updated to meet the BCH requirements, as well as national source on GMO informative portal will be available.

Present Status of Biosafety Regime in Slovakia

Igor Ferenčík

1. Regulatory and administrative regime:

Act on Using of GM Technology and GMOs (No. 151/2002) is in force since April 2002. The Act was amended in 2005 (by Act No. 77/2005). Regulation (No. 399/2005) to the Act was changed following the Act amendment. This legislative documents implemented relevant EU directives and the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety.

To this basic law there are additional acts, in competency of:

- Ministry of Agriculture: Act on Food (Codex Alimentarius), Act on Feed, Act on Seed,
- Ministry of Health: Act on Human Health.

Corresponding regulations were adopted to all mentioned Acts.

Basic rules for approval of GMOs use are as follows:

- Contained use regime – releasing of approvals is in competency of MoE. 20 users are registered in Slovakia, basically in research area, just 2 commercial users.
- Releasing of GMOs into the environment (for experiments and trials) is also in competency of MoE. No trials have been carried out in Slovakia up to date.
- Placing on the market is only partially in competency of MoE, as all approving process goes in European Commission with participation of all member states. No request for approval in Slovakia so far.

One project activities will focus to amendment of the existing Act on GMO especially as to competencies of MoE. Approving of goods and their placing on the market belongs apparently to competency of MoA.

2. Biosafety policy:

National biosafety policy is not yet prepared officially in Slovakia; it is an aim of the project. The present accepted position is “the case by case” principle, with regard to “precautionary principle”. It is necessary to stress that the EU approved the common EU biosafety policy, valid in all member states, which will be revised next year.

3. Monitoring and control system:

Slovak Environmental Inspection is competent to control all types of using of GMOs, except those, which are in competency of other Ministry of the Environment departments (seeds, food, feed, e.g.). Inspectors mulcted 3 users in regime of contained use for inadequacies in line of duty.

Moreover, cooperation was agreed with the Institute of Molecular Biology SAS, which shall serve as a reference laboratory for MoE.

Following bodies are working within the Ministry of Agriculture competency:

- Central Control and Testing Institute in Agriculture, which is competent for monitoring of seed and feed, and serves as an reference laboratory for MoA. It serves also as an advisory institution for GM seed and feed. There was no founds of unapproved seed and feed in Slovakia to date.
- State Veterinary and Food Authority, which is competent to control all veterinary and food products (include GM ones) in the market. Some unlabelled imported food products were discovered in the Slovak market.

Within the Ministry of Health, the Institute of Public Health is competent to control GM medicines placed on the market and food used in public feeding.

National Biosafety Framework of the Czech Republic – Present Status

Zuzana Doubková

The presentation deals with the following components of the national biosafety framework in the Czech Republic: biosafety policy, regulatory regime and administrative system.

The biosafety policy is defined in the wider context of strategic documents, usually adopted by the Czech Government, especially: Strategy for Sustainable Development, State Environmental Policy, Strategy to Assure Food Safety and others. At the same time the general policy has to comply with the specific requirements set by the international obligations of the Czech Republic. The biosafety policy of the Ministry of the Environment is therefore based on the precautionary principle expressed by existing international and national regulations. The general approach of precautionary principle should nevertheless be balanced by case-by-case risk assessment using all the scientific data and methodology available. Public information and participation represents a very important part of the policy, ensuring maximum transparency of the decision making process together with due consideration of standpoints of different stakeholders.

The regulatory regime in the Czech Republic consists of three levels: international, EU, and national. On the international level, the Czech Republic has been since 2001 a party to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety that entered into force in September 2003. Directly applicable European regulations set rules for traceability and labelling of GMOs and of food and feed produced from GMOs, as well as the authorisation process of GM food and feed. EU regulation on transboundary movements of GMOs transposes the provisions of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety as regards export and unintentional movements. The authorisation procedure for placing GMOs on the market involves all member states of the European Union. At national level the Act No. 78/2004, on the Use of Genetically Modified Organisms and Genetic Products applies. The Act covers the contained use and deliberate release of GMOs into the environment setting the administrative system for authorisation and supervision within this scope. Due to the wide spectrum of modern biotechnology applications, the Act has to be linked to other legislation in agriculture (food and feed, coexistence, seeds and varieties), health (health safety, pharmaceuticals) or research sectors.

The administrative system includes authorities dealing with different aspects of risk assessment and authorities connected with the end use of GMOs. The Competent Authority under the Act 78/2004 is the Ministry of the Environment. The Ministry is responsible for both the contained use and deliberate release of GMOs, it takes part in the EU authorisation procedure under the Directive 2001/18/EC and it is the Competent Authority and the focal point for the CPB in the Czech Republic. As regards the GM food and feed or the registration of pharmaceuticals containing GMO, the Ministry provides the environmental risk assessment. To fulfil these tasks, the Ministry established in 2001 an expert advisory body, the Czech Commission for the Use of GMOs and Genetic Products. The Commission assesses the notifications for the use of GMOs from the ERA point of view, provides ad hoc consultations for the Ministry on different aspects of modern biotechnology and follows new scientific developments in connection with GMOs. The Ministry of Agriculture is the Competent Authority under the EU Regulation on GM food and feed. It is also responsible for setting and supervising the rules of coexistence and it carries out the agricultural risk/benefit evaluation of GM crops as a part of the authorisation process. The Central Institute of Supervising and Testing in Agriculture deals with the seed legislation and variety testing. The Ministry of Health of the Czech Republic prepares methodology for health safety evaluation of GMOs and issues its opinions during the authorisation process. The Centre for the Hygiene of Food Chains of National Institute of Public Health cooperates with the above mentioned Ministries as the food safety is concerned. The main Authority as regards the inspection, supervision and control of GMOs in the Czech Republic is the Czech Environmental Inspectorate. Other supervision bodies also participate in these tasks. The Ministry of the Environment and the CEI use three top Czech laboratories for the detection of GMOs on contract basis.

National Biosafety Framework of the Czech Republic – Present Status (Monitoring and Enforcement, Laboratory Testing)

Jan Káš

The legislative background of the GMOs monitoring and enforcement is given in the part 6, § 27 of the Act 78/2004 on Genetically Modified Organisms and Genetic Products. The Act defines following competent control authorities: Ministry of the Environment, Ministry of Health and Ministry of Agriculture. These three ministries are using for its executive function eight institutions authorized to perform supervising and monitoring. The roles of all these institutions are described in detail in the published document “National Biosafety Framework for the Czech Republic” (Káš J., Roudná M., 2004) where all communication means (web pages, phone and fax numbers and e-mail addresses) are also given together with the names of the responsible persons. In addition the Customs Administration of the Czech Republic, belonging to the Ministry of Finance, takes part in the GMOs transboundary movement.

The actual information about the GMOs users and GMOs types is available at the web site of the Ministry of the Environment with all kinds of information requested by the Act 78/2004 and the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety (www.env.cz). Information about planting of GM-maize, up to now the only GM-commodity in the Czech agriculture, is presented at the web of the Ministry of Agriculture (www.mze.cz).

To enhance the effectiveness of the laboratory control of GMOs the Czech National Network of GMO laboratories was created under leadership of the National Laboratory for Identification of GMOs and Fingerprinting, Research Institute for Crop Production (www.vurv.cz) which is also delegated as an official Czech representative in the European Network of GMO Laboratories (ENGL). The Czech National Network of GMO laboratories includes both accredited and up to now non-accredited laboratories. Special meetings are organized to solve all topical problems with detection and quantification of GMOs, to exchange experience and to enhance both national and international contacts. The participation of Slovak GMO laboratories in these activities became already a tradition. Proceedings of the meetings in the Czech and Slovak languages represent a permanent record of these events.

Czech Republic cooperates with all member states of the European Union via ENGL and other European institutions. The presentation informed about the activity scope, types of analyzed samples and assays used, as well other activities of all GMOs laboratories involved in the Czech National Network of GMO laboratories.

***Bt* Maize Growing in the Czech Republic**

Marie Čeřovská

The only genetically modified (GM) crop commercially grown in our country is maize - *Bt* varieties of the line MON810. In 2005, these varieties were sown for the first time on 270 ha in the Czech Republic. In 2006, the total area of GM maize has increased up to 1,290 ha and it has been grown by 85 farmers. In general about 275,500 ha of maize are grown in the Czech Republic (most of the area is harvested as silage/green maize). A small acreage about 1,000 ha is grown as organic production.

There is a legal framework for coexistence in the Czech Republic. Legislation including measures for GM crops growing was established in three steps and entered into force for the first time in April 2005. Nowadays we have two main legal documents to disposal dealing directly with coexistence:

- Amendment No. 441/2005 of the Act on Agriculture No. 252/97 and
- Decree No. 89/2006, on more detailed conditions for production of genetically modified variety.

Binding measures managing coexistence in the Czech Republic result from Commission recommendation from 2003 dealing with the issue of co-existence. In addition to a legal requirement on labelling of products derived from or containing more than 0.9 % of GMO, there is zero tolerance of GMO in organic products, in the Czech Republic. In order to ensure the co-existence between all agricultural systems available in the Czech Republic, fundamental measures were implemented. Among the measures controlling approved GM crops are minimum isolation distances between different types of fields with the same crop, notification of GM crop areas and record keeping of the fields with GM crops.

First experience of the Czech farmers growing *Bt* maize in 2005 sounds positive. On the basis of statements by 47 (from total of 52) farmers producing *Bt*-maize in 2005 we stated that there was observed decrease in the European corn borer (*Ostrinia nubilalis*) infestation and decrease in the *Fusarium* (possibly carrying mycotoxins) infestation as a secondary effect by the most of respondents. A higher yield of *Bt* maize (on average by 5 – 20 %) was also mentioned by some farmers.

European Network of GMO Laboratories: A Basis for Operation of Czech Laboratories

Jaroslava Ovesná

The European Network of GMO Laboratories (ENGL) is a unique platform of EU experts that play an eminent role in the development, harmonisation and standardisation of means and methods for sampling, detection, identification and quantification of Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs) or derived products in a wide variety of matrices, covering seeds, grains, food, feed and environmental samples. The network was inaugurated in Brussels, on December 4th, 2002, welcome new member states on May 1st, 2004 and it currently consists of 74 national enforcement laboratories, representing all 25 EU Member States plus Norway. National Reference Laboratories (NRL) at RICP Prague, Laboratories at CAFIA Brno, NIPH Brno, ICT Prague and SVI Jihlava are ENGL members.

To assist Community Reference Laboratory (CRL), established at the Joint Research Center in Ispra, Italy, is the main task of ENGL. CRL **validated** protocols for GMO detection and quantification submitted by notifiers to European Commission. For instance NRL participate in several validation studies, in 2006 they were Event-Specific Method for the Identification and Quantification of Event MON 1445 in Cotton, Event-Specific Method for the Identification and Quantification of Event MON 15985 in Cotton, Event-Specific Method for the Identification and Quantification of Event Bollgard @531 in Cotton, Event-Specific Method for the Identification and Quantification of Event EH92-527-1 in Potato, Specific detection of GM oilseed rape line RT73.

On the other hand CRL provides ENGL laboratories a useful information, standards, reference material and guidance for GMO testing. Also CRL and ENGL have issued scientific and positional papers related to GMOs.

ENGL forms an important basis for communication among laboratories, information flow and collaboration.

Conclusions

On the basis of experience of both participating countries and taking into account existing structure and biosafety mechanisms, the workshop discussion led to the following conclusions regarding five main components of the National Biosafety Framework:

1. Biosafety Policy

Inter-sectoral and inter-institutional communication and cooperation need to be strengthened.

Biosafety related national strategic documents require regular updating in line with adopted international commitments.

2. Regulatory Regime

National legislation exists, but its review and amendments are necessary reflecting conclusions of international meetings and development of European legislation.

3. System to Handle Notifications, Requests for Authorisations, Risk Assessment

Basic system in force, nevertheless

competencies need to be clarified in more details in certain respects,

risk assessment system needs to reflect development and new commitments.

4. Monitoring and Enforcement

Laboratory cooperation need to be enhanced and network of the Slovak laboratories established, standardization of applied methods should be developed in line with international requirements.

5. Public Awareness, Education and Participation

Biosafety issues need to be wider included in awareness programmes and school curricula, legislation amended where necessary.

PROJECT UNEP/GEF: BUILDING CAPACITY FOR EFFECTIVE PARTICIPATION
IN THE BIOSAFETY CLEARING HOUSE

INCEPTION WORKSHOP

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Prague

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AGENDA

9:30 – 10:00	Registration of participants
10:00 – 10:30	Introduction <i>Representative of the Ministry of the Environment of the Czech Republic</i> <i>Igor Ferenčík, Director, Biosafety Department, Ministry of the Environment of the Slovak Republic</i> <i>David Duthie, Task Manager, UNEP-GEF Biosafety Unit</i> Chair: Zuzana Doubková
10:30 – 11:00	Principles, Use and Access to the BCH <i>Vida Marolt Parabucki – BCH Regional Adviser</i>
11:00 – 11:30	Break
11:30 - 11:50	Information on BCH Project – Slovak Republic <i>Lucia Gajdúšková, Ministry of the Environment of SR</i>
11:50 - 12:10	BCH System of Slovakia – Present Status <i>Martin Chovan / Lubomír Petrovič</i>
12:10 – 12:30	Discussion
12:30 - 14:00	Lunch break Chair: Igor Ferenčík
14:00 - 14:30	Information on BCH Project – Czech Republic <i>Milena Roudná, UNEP/GEF Biosafety Implementation Project CR</i>
14:30 – 15:00	BCH System of the Czech Republic – Present Status <i>Miloš Němec, Ministry of the Environment of the Czech Republic</i> <i>Luděk Knorr and Vladimír Kubíček, Czech Environmental Information Agency (CENIA)</i>
15:00 – 15:30	Discussion
15:30 – 15:45	Break
15:45 -16:30	Conclusions and closure of the workshop

ABSTRACTS

An Introduction to the Biosafety Clearing House

Vida Marolt

The objectives of this presentation are to introduce the mechanism of Clearing House to participants with stress on Biosafety Clearing House (BCH) that was established under Article 20 of the Cartagena Protocol. BCH enables Parties to implement Cartagena Protocol. Presentation shows participants the type of information that is kept in BCH and the ways how the information can be entered, when the information has to be entered and how the information can be retrieved. It also introduces the various stakeholders who should be aware of information in BCH and its use.

Biosafety Clearing House Project of the Slovak Republic

Lucia Gajdúšková

Participants in the Project who are responsible for preparation, development, application and service of national BCH in Slovak Republic are: National Executing Agency (Slovak Hydrometeorological Institute), BCH National Focal Point (MoE), Data entry and/or an Information Technology staff (MoE and SHMI) and Biosafety Clearing House Task Force.

Major stakeholders are : Involved ministries (Ministry of the Environment, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Agriculture), Government agencies (Slovak Hydrometeorological Institute, Food Research Institute), scientific community (Slovak Academy of Sciences).

Main objectives of the Project: to design web site and to ensure its technical equipment (software and connection with central BCH - Montreal) and to create system for obtaining information from other Authorities and data insertion to national BCH.

Project cycle:

1. to create BCH Task Force (*at the beginning of April 2006*) and to gather information for National BCH system,
2. to sign MoU (*Memorandum of Understanding - signed at the end of March*) and to accept the funds,
3. to prepare national BCH system and its testing (*present status*),
4. workshops and training (5)
5. closing of the project (*in March 2007*).

Workshops and training:

Workshop for general public	1-2 days	General information
Workshop for professional education	2 days	Learn how to manipulate, input and use data from BCH website
Workshop for scientists	2 days	Learn how to manipulate, input and use data from BCH website

Workshop for professional users (state administration, inspectors)	2 days	Learn how to input, obtain and handle data from BCH website
Workshop for professional users (producers, businessmen and consumers NGO)	2 days	Learn how to input, obtain and handle data from BCH website
BCH Task Force meetings	2 x 1 day	Agenda of the GMO in Slovak Republic

BCH System of Slovakia – Present Status

Eubomír Petrovič

Current status of public knowledge on GMO is very poor. The main reason is that information about GMO are difficult to find as well as they are complicated to understand. Solution of this problem is to create web sites which provide information about GMO for public. Information have to interest visitors, conception have to be clear and understandable. In Slovak Republic, knowledge on GM issues is poor. People are frightened due to scaremongering and incorrect information provided by some organizations without professional knowledge. The website www.gmo.sk was created in the year 2002. It was a first test to know if people want to be informed more about GMO problems. The response was very good, visitors were interested in more information. Parallel with the Slovak BCH system creation the website was modified and it is now more sophisticated, clear to understand, information are divided in this for scientists and for public. New coming features as newsletters, discussion forums, frequently asked questions, search engine, survey pools, BCH portal database joining, etc. will attract more visitors interested in GMO problems.

Implementation of BCH information system for Slovak Republic is still in progress. Interoperable database is nearly finished and it will be able to join the BCH central portal soon. The information system is divided now into three parts. The first part is IS on articles on GM issues, the second is IS for contributors and the last is IS for coordinators. The first part on publications contains content management system with dynamic channels to download information from BCH central office and provide these information on GMO.SK website. The second part is created as local BCH system for getting documents from contributors. This helps coordinator to collect data and documents for next providing on BCH central portal. The last part contains system for sending information from contributors into BCH central portal. So only few people have access directly into BCH central office. Coordinator is getting information from contributors by request in the local BCH system.

The whole system is still under development. Certain issues need to be consulted with IT experts.

The main aim of the gmo.sk website is to extend public knowledge about GMOs. This requires publishing a lot of information to ensure that public get an updated knowledge on GM technology and biosafety principles. We are making plans for providing the Slovak BCH system with all parts of subsystems in a near future. Joining the BCH central portal is an important task of these days.

Building Capacity for Effective Participation in the Biosafety Clearing-House – Czech Republic

Milena Roudná

The project is an add-on project of the National Biosafety Framework Project and it is scheduled for two years (2006 - 2008). Ministry of the Environment was appointed as the National Executing Agency (NEA). Project is developed on the basis of the *Memorandum of Understanding* concluded between UNEP and the Ministry of the Environment. The Ministry as the NEA agrees to execute the national level activities of the project and to ensure continuity and sustainability of established mechanisms. The NEA establishes BCH Task Force to assist in the implementation of the project at national level. The Task Force consists of representatives of the Ministry of the Environment (NEA), Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Health, Czech Environmental Information Agency (CENIA, charged by the BCH data processing and webpage), universities and the UNEP-GEF NBF Implementation Project coordinator.

The main aim of the project is to develop national system and mechanisms enabling participation of the Czech Republic in the global Biosafety Clearing-House and fulfil its commitments as a Party to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety. For this purpose, the UNEP will support the Czech Republic on the basis of the NEA information on the staffing and equipment needs. It was agreed that the UNEP Biosafety Unit will procure, in line with procurement rules and regulations of the NEA and following national standards, basic computer equipment and services and will support BCH workshops and meetings. The Czech Government contribution *in kind* for the project will constitute technical and professional assistance, equipment maintenance, working space, personnel and consultations. During the project the training workshops will be held: one national level workshop on the use of the BCH with the support of an expert trained through the UNEP-GEF BCH project (member of the Roster of Experts), one workshop on the BCH databases and regulatory development, as well as 11 Task Force Meetings.

The Czech Republic will procure required data to the global BCH by using the BCH Central Portal (Option 1 according to the project possibilities). CENIA will provide technical services and it intends to further develop the system, which enables pushing data from the country server to the BCH Central Portal (changing from Option 1 to Option 4, i.e. "PUSH" model).

BCH System of the Czech Republic – Present Status

Luděk Knorr, Vladimír Kubíček, Miloš Němec

One of the obligations of Parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety is provision of required information to the Biosafety Clearing-House (BCH) established under Article 20 of the Protocol to facilitate the sharing of information on, and experience with, genetically modified organisms (GMOs), and to assist Parties to implement the Protocol. BCH was established in the Czech Republic in 2004 at the Ministry of the Environment (www.biosafety.cz) as a static system entering and managing country data from a Management Centre of the BCH (design corresponds to Option 1 proposed by the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity). The aim of creators of the Czech BCH was to create a simple information system assigned above all to potential exporters to the Czech Republic, emphasising pragmatism and conciseness without cumulating extensive general data („GMO Google“) available in other sources. All other GMO data beyond the scope of BCH assigned to the broad public are available in Czech at the Ministry of the Environment web-page (www.env.cz).

At present the Czech BCH is under further development and operated by the Czech Environmental Information Agency (CENIA) – www.cenia.cz. This agency performs synthetic research in ecology and environmental protection and provides professional support to public administration in the area of integrated prevention. Czech BCH web-page operated by CENIA: www.cenia.cz/biosafety

Within the UNEP-GEF Project *Building Capacity for Effective Participation in the Biosafety Clearing-House* the Czech Republic starts with Option 1 intending gradually develop the system, which enables pushing data from the country server to the BCH Central Portal (“PUSH” model, Option 4).

Conclusions

Both participating countries meet the basic commitments as Parties to the CPB and both are involved in the UNEP/GEF Project Building Capacity for Effective Participation in the Biosafety Clearing-house. Nevertheless, different system exists as to BCH.

Slovak Republic

BCH system has been developed based on the original GMO web-page of the Slovak Hydrometeorological Institute (www.gmo.sk). National BCH provides information on publications, enables local databases connection and central BCH database connection.

Within the Project, the Slovak Republic chose the “PULL” model in providing information to the central BCH (option 3).

Czech Republic

Data required on the basis of legislation and other important information are available at the Ministry of the Environment web-page (www.env.cz).

BCH system is under development. Present status: www.biosafety.cz (established in 2004). New system operated by the Czech Environmental Information Agency (CENIA) – pilot site: www.cenia.cz/biosafety

Within the Project, the Czech Republic chose using the BCH Central Portal in providing information to the central BCH (option 1). It is envisaged further develop the system, which enables pushing data from the country server to the BCH Central Portal (“PUSH” model, option 4).

Both countries welcome the UNEP/GEF Project as stimulation and direct support for further development of their BCH systems. Cooperation with the regional UNEP expert is regarded as a useful assistance in establishment and functioning of the national BCH systems.

Authors

David Duthie, UNEP-GEF Biosafety Unit, Geneva, Switzerland
e-mail: David.Duthie@unep.ch

Vida Marolt, UNEP-GEF Regional Advisor
e-mail: vida_marolt@yahoo.co.uk

Igor Ferencík, Ministry of the Environment, Biosafety Department, Bratislava, Slovak Republic
e-mail: ferencik.igor@enviro.gov.sk

Milena Roudná, Adviser, Ministry of the Environment, Prague, Czech Republic
e-mail: roudna@env.cz

Danka Valková, Faculty of Natural Sciences of the Comenius University, Bratislava, Slovak Republic
dvalkova@fns.uniba.sk or umbivava@yahoo.com

Zuzana Doubková, Ministry of the Environment, Prague, Czech Republic
e-mail: doubkova@env.cz

Jan Káš, Institute of Chemical Technology, Prague, Czech Republic
e-mail: Jan.Kas@vscht.cz

Marie Čerovská, Ministry of Agriculture, Prague, Czech Republic
e-mail: marie.cerovska@mze.cz

Jaroslava Ovesná, Research Institute of Crop Production, Prague, Czech Republic
e-mail: ovesna@vurv.cz

Miloš Němec, Ministry of the Environment, Prague, Czech Republic
e-mail: milos_nemec@env.cz

Lucia Gajdúšková, Ministry of the Environment, Bratislava, Slovak Republic
e-mail: gajduskova.lucia@enviro.gov.sk

Ľubomír Petrovič, Ministry of the Environment and Slovak Hydrometeorological Institute, Bratislava, Slovak Republic
e-mail: lubomir.petrovic@shmu.sk

Luděk Knorr, CENIA, Czech Environmental Information Agency, Prague, Czech Republic
e-mail: ludek.knorr@cenia.cz

Vladimír Kubíček, CENIA, Czech Environmental Information Agency, Prague, Czech Republic
e-mail: vladimir.kubicek@cenia.cz