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Biotechnology

WILL THE EU BAN ON GENETICALLY MODIFIED ORGANISMS STAND?

As the US appears to be preparing for a possible case at the WTO against the EU over its de facto moratorium on approvals of the commercial release of genetically modified organisms (GMO) into the environment, Robert Madelin of the European Commission announced that the EU would restart the approval process for GMOs in October 2002. It remains unclear, however, whether EU member states will actually agree to lift the de facto moratorium in autumn. Meanwhile, EU Environment Ministers at a 4 March meeting of the Council of the European Union debated the new environmental liability regime put forward by the European Commission, which both ministers and NGOs criticised as too weak as it did not specifically take into account liability for GMOs.

Approvals to restart, Commission says

Robert Madelin from the European Commission's Directorate-General for Trade told reporters that the approval process for GMOs would restart on 17 October this year, by which date EU Members are required to have implemented the EC Directive 2001/18/EC on the deliberate release of GMOs into the environment (see Background, below). It remains unclear, however, whether the European Commission will be able to convince countries to lift the de facto moratorium as several EU Members, including France and Luxembourg, have in the past refused to do so until legislation on traceability, labelling and liability was in place, which is not expected until 2003 (see *BRIDGES Weekly*, 30 October 2001, <http://www.ictsd.org/weekly/01-10-30/story4.htm>).

Liability regime seen as too weak

At the Council of European Union meeting on 4 March, the 15 EU Environment Ministers discussed the new environmental liability regime, proposed by the European Commission in January as part of its effort to break

the deadlock. The proposed regime has been widely criticised for the lack of specific references to GMO-related liability, with some calling for a separate liability regime for GMOs. In response, European Commissioner for the Environment Margot Wallström defended the regime, arguing that "where the use of the GMO would be found to be inconsistent with the authorisation given for it, resulting environmental damage would indeed be covered by the new liability rules."

Ministers and conservation groups are concerned that releasing GMOs into the environment could have unforeseen long-term consequences such as 'genetic pollution', the creation of 'superweeds' or detrimental effects on non-target species. The environmental liability regime has to be approved by both the Council of Ministers and the European Parliament before it becomes law; a process that is expected to take at least two years before the two institutions have agreed on a final version of the legislation.

US considers options for WTO challenge

The US Special Agriculture Negotiator Allen Johnson and the Assistant for Agricultural Affairs Jim Murphy met with the USDA Agriculture Biotech Planning Committee in mid-February to discuss options for filing a case against the EU at the WTO. One option would be for the US not to file a case until October, when EU legislation on the release of GMOs into the environment takes effect and countries might lift the moratorium. A second option would be to ask for formal WTO consultation on the moratorium and put the EC on notice about the alleged WTO inconsistency of the moratorium. The US -- the world's largest exporter of GMO products -- has long been dissatisfied with the EU GMO regime, which it claims has resulted in export losses to US corn growers of about USD 200 million annually. The US furthermore argues that mandatory labelling and traceability requirements of GMO products would be incompatible with WTO rules as they would be unnecessarily trade-restrictive due to the high costs of segregating GMOs from non-GMOs (see BRIDGE Trade Biores, 24 January 2002; <http://www.ictsd.org/biores/02-01-24/story1.htm>)

Background

Since spring 1998, no new GMOs have been authorised for planting or use in the EU due to a "de facto" moratorium, which was declared by several EU Environment Ministers (Denmark, France, Greece, Italy and Luxembourg) based on the argument that regulations at the time (ie Directive 90/220/EEC) were not sufficient for controlling the release of GMOs into the environment. As the result, the EU adopted the Directive 2001/18/EC on the deliberate release into the environment of GMOs to replace Directive 90/220/EEC (see BRIDGES Weekly, 20 February 2001; <http://www.ictsd.org/html/weekly/story4.20-02-01.htm>). Under the new Directive new market approvals of GMOs will be granted for a fixed period up to ten years. New approvals are subject to strict environmental risk assessments on a case-by case basis, including long-term cumulative effects of GMOs on human health, the environment and the food/feed chain. Furthermore, the Directive provides full traceability of GMO products at all market stages and labelling of all GMO products, including those derived but no longer containing GMOs. The Directive, however, does not set out rules for how these provisions can be made operational and does not include liability rules, which has led some EU Members to declare that they would not lift the moratorium until the question of traceability, labelling and liability had been solved. In response, the European Commission has proposed new EU regulations on labelling and traceability which are currently being discussed in the EU Parliament.

Additional Resources

The EU Directive on the Deliberate Release of GMOs into the environment (2001/18/EC) is available at http://europa.eu.int/eur-lex/en/lif/dat/2001/en_301L0018.html

"GMO Debate Heats Up in Europe; Countries, Groups Chide Commission", BIOTECH WATCH, 27 February, 2002; "EU aide sees biotech approvals resuming in fall," REUTERS, 4 March, 2002; "EU liability proposal too weak say ministers", ENVIRONMENT DAILY, 5 March 2002; "USTR prepares WTO case on EU Biotech, Mulls Decision on Launch" INSIDE US TRADE, 22 February 2002.

Precautionary Principles

NEW EU FOOD SAFETY LAW ELABORATES PRECAUTIONARY PRINCIPLE

A new European food safety regulation, which entered into force on 21 February, for the first time elaborates the controversial Precautionary Principle in EU food legislation. The Regulation furthermore establishes the European Food Safety Authority, provides a mandate for the European Commission to directly intervene in emergency situations, and includes provisions on traceability.

Precautionary Principle elaborated

The Regulation (EC) No 178/2002 -- which lays down principles governing food and feed in general, and food and feed safety in particular -- stipulates that risk management shall take into account the Precautionary Principle. This requirement is further defined in Article 7 of the Regulation which states that in cases where the possibility of harmful effects on health have been identified "but scientific uncertainty persists, risk management measures ... may be adopted, pending further scientific information for a more comprehensive risk assessment." Such measures should not be more trade-restrictive than required to meet the desired level of health protection and should be reviewed "within a reasonable period of time". Thus, while the Principle had previously been referred to in EU legislation -- including the 1997 Treaty of the European Union and the Directive 2001/18/EC on the deliberate release into the environment of GMOs (see BRIDGES Weekly, 20 February 2002; <http://www.ictsd.org/html/weekly/story4.20-02-01.htm>) -- the Regulation for the first time also includes an elaboration.

Food Safety Authority established

According to analysts, the new regulation reflects growing awareness within the EU of the need for coordinated action to ensure adequate safety standards. As part of this development, the new regulation establishes a European Food Safety Authority which is instructed to provide scientific advice and technical support to EU policy makers and disseminate independent information, as well as a Europe-wide information network to ensure quick dissemination of risk-related information.

While the new Authority will focus primarily on health-related aspects of food and feed, it will also take into account issues related to animal health and welfare, plant health and environment, with the instruction of providing scientific opinions on these issues as well as on products other than food and feed relating to genetically modified organisms (GMOs). To this end, scientific panels will be set up dealing, inter alia, with plant health, plant protection products and their residues; GMOs; biological hazards, and animal health and welfare.

Other relevant provisions

The new regulation also enables the European Commission to directly intervene "on its own initiative or at the request of a Member State" when food or feed is likely to "constitute a serious risk to human health, animal health or the environment", including suspending imports of food and feed from third countries and setting conditions for imports. "For the first time, the Commission can act on its own initiative," said Commission spokeswoman Beate Gminder.

The Regulation furthermore sets out requirements for traceability (ie a system for tracing all foods and food components from their origin to the point of final consumption) of food, feed, food-producing animals and any other substances intended for food use, in order to allow for the targeted withdrawal of food in case of food safety problems and to provide information to consumers or control officials. Any food or feed to be placed on the EU market should be adequately labelled or identified to facilitate traceability. The issue of traceability continues to cause disagreement between the US and EU in the context of proposed EU labelling and traceability requirements for GMOs which the US regards as "not workable" and unnecessarily trade restrictive (see BRIDGES Trade BioRes, 24 January 2002; <http://www.ictsd.org/biores/02-01-24/story1.htm>).

Background on the Precautionary Principle

The EU has long been advocating the use of the Precautionary Principle in various international fora, including the WTO (see BRIDGES Weekly, 31 July 2001; <http://www.ictsd.org/html/weekly/31-07-01/wtoinbrief.htm>) and the Codex Alimentarius Commission (see BRIDGES Weekly, 1 May 2001; <http://www.ictsd.org/html/weekly/01-05-01/inbrief.htm>), based on a Communication released in February 2000 by the European Commission setting out guidelines for its application. While supporting a precautionary approach as part of a science-based decision-making process, the US generally opposes explicit references to the Principle itself which it regards as unscientific and arbitrary. For their part, many developing countries fear that the Precautionary Principle might be used as disguised protectionism to restrict market access and favour the domestic market.

Within the multilateral trading system, reference to precaution has only been included in the SPS Agreement which allows countries to adopt measures to protect human, animal or plant life or health, even when the relevant scientific evidence is insufficient (Article 5). This provision is further qualified, however, by requiring these measures to be provisional, i.e. "Members shall seek to obtain the additional information necessary for a more objective assessment of risk and review the sanitary or phytosanitary measure accordingly within a reasonable period of time." In addition, any measures implemented pursuant to the SPS Agreement must be non-discriminatory and "not more trade restrictive than required".

Additional Resources

The Regulation (EC) No 178/2002 can be accessed at http://europa.eu.int/eur-lex/en/dat/2002/l_031/l_03120020201en00010024.pdf.

The Commission's Communication on the Precautionary Principle is available at http://europa.eu.int/comm/dgs/health_consumer/library/pub/pub07_en.pdf.

"Brussels gains new powers to act in food safety crises," FT, 22 February 2002; ICTSD Internal Files.

Environment at the WTO

MEMBERS DIVIDED OVER FISHERIES SUBSIDIES

In informal meetings of the WTO Negotiating Group on Rules and the Committee on Trade and Environment (CTE), Members set tentative schedules for their upcoming meetings in 2002. Disagreement persisted over whether the Group on Rules should discuss fisheries subsidies as a separate agenda item or include them in wider talks on subsidies. Some argue that treating this issue separately would boost its status and might facilitate the inclusion of environmental and sustainable development-related aspects.

Disagreement over fisheries subsidies

WTO Members at a 28 February informal meeting of the newly-established Negotiating Group on Rules tentatively agreed to hold five meetings in 2002, currently scheduled for 11 March, 13-15 May, 8-10 July, 16-18 October and 25-27 November. However, they failed to reach agreement on how to deal with fisheries subsidies. Iceland -- supported by others including Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Peru, New Zealand, Malaysia and the US -- said that fisheries subsidies should be negotiated under a separate agenda item given that they received specific mention in the Doha Declaration. For their part, Japan and South Korea -- who had opposed references to fisheries subsidies during the Doha negotiations -- advocated discussions in the context of general subsidies. The Chair of the Rules Group, New Zealand's Ambassador Timothy John Groser, said he would conduct further consultations with Members on this issue.

According to one environmental source, negotiations under a separate item might raise the status of the issue by making agreement on fisheries a negotiating objective in its own right, thereby forcing Members to produce

results. The source also speculated that developing countries might be more likely to accept environmental arguments in a separate discussion on fisheries subsidies rather than during negotiations on subsidies in general. One trade source furthermore stated that fisheries subsidies were the only subsidy issue that had been identified as a win-win-win scenario (i.e. with economic, environmental and developmental benefits) and should therefore be treated separately.

The conservation group World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) welcomed Iceland's initiative and the show of force from key 'friends of fish' during the meeting. WWF hopes that including fisheries subsidies as a distinct agenda item will broaden the scope and modalities of the discussion without separating it from the main negotiations on subsidies. In particular, it would enable a differentiation between subsidies with negative or positive impacts on conservation and sustainable development, and would allow existing norms and regulations (for example developed at the UN Food and Agriculture Organization or the UN Conference on Trade and Development), to be taken into account. Also, general subsidies are likely to be discussed by subsidies experts, while discussions on fisheries subsidies, WWF argues, need to include additional experts in order to address environmental and sustainable development-related aspects.

Background

At the Fourth WTO Ministerial Conference in Doha, Qatar in November last year, Members agreed to conduct negotiations on clarifying and improving WTO disciplines on fisheries subsidies "in the context of" negotiations on 'WTO Rules' (i.e. anti-dumping, subsidies and regional trade agreements). This decision marks a significant change from the previous WTO mandate on this issue that had restricted discussions to the CTE which prior to Doha did not function as a negotiating forum. Reference to negotiations on fisheries subsidies are also included in the Trade and Environment section (para. 31) of the Doha Declaration.

CTE sets agenda for 2002

At a 1 March informal meetings, Members set tentative dates for Special Sessions of the CTE where negotiations on environment will take place (see BRIDGES Trade BioRes, 7 February 2002; <http://www.ictsd.org/biores/02-02-07/story1.htm>), with meetings scheduled for 21 March, 13-14 June, and 8-9 October back-to-back with the Regular Sessions of the CTE. Observers would not be authorised to attend Special Sessions, as these are negotiating fora. An information session with secretariats from relevant multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) will be held, and will address technical assistance, capacity building, and procedures for information exchange between MEAs and the WTO.

Special Sessions will focus on the mandated negotiations outlined in para. 31, namely the relationship between existing WTO rules and specific trade obligations set out in MEAs; procedures for information exchange between relevant WTO committees and MEA secretariats and criteria for granting of observer status; and the reduction or elimination of tariff and non-tariff barriers to environmental goods and services. The latter point remains somewhat unclear, however, as Members also decided at the 1 March meeting that negotiations on environmental goods and services would be best addressed in the Market Access Negotiating Group.

"WTO Members set schedule to implement Doha round rules," WTO REPORTER, 1 March 2002; ICTSD Internal Files.

In Brief

BRAZIL TO MAP POTENTIAL MEDICINAL PLANTS. Brazil's environmental agency IBAMA has created a research center which will set up a database of Brazil's medicinal plant species in an effort to prevent their appropriation by 'biopirates' for commercial use outside the country. "The only way to discipline, order or effectively combat the illegal use of these resources is by learning all about them," said IBAMA President Hamilton Casara. To date, Brazil has mapped 300 medicinal plant species, thought to represent less than 10 percent of potential species. IBAMA estimates the global market for plant medicines to be worth billions of

dollars annually. The initiative will also include sustainable development projects in some of Brazil's remote communities aimed at providing them with an alternative income. The agency has furthermore enlisted 2,000 workers to help prevent plant and animal trafficking. For further information, see the IBAMA (Portuguese) website at <http://www.ibama.gov.br/>.

"Brazil starts mapping medicinal plant potential," REUTERS, 25 February 2002.

EUROPEAN COMMISSION PROPOSAL ON IMPLEMENTING BIOSAFETY PROTOCOL. The European Commission on 22 February released its long-awaited proposal on regulating cross-border movements of genetically modified organisms (GMOs), which aims to implement the provisions of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety into EU legislation. In particular, the proposal introduces a notification obligation for exports of GMOs intended for deliberate release into the environment. It furthermore includes information obligations at the international level on EU practices, legislation and decisions on GMOs, setting rules for identification of GMOs for exports in line with its latest labelling and traceability proposals (see BRIDGES Weekly, 20 February 2001, <http://www.ictsd.org/html/weekly/31-07-01/story5.htm>). Regarding GMO imports, the proposal only covers unintentional transboundary movements of genetically modified products, while referring to existing EU legislation for imports and intra-EU movements. A de facto European moratorium on the approval of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) has been in place since 1998. The Commission is also preparing a proposal for a Council decision on the conclusion of the Protocol aimed at ensuring its ratification by the EU. The Cartagena Protocol was adopted in January 2000 to ensure "an adequate level of protection in the field of the safe transfer, handling and use of living modified organisms resulting from modern biotechnology". To date, 11 of the 50 ratifications necessary for the Protocol to enter into force have been submitted.

"Responsible management of GMOs: Commission proposes EU implementation of Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety," PRESS RELEASE, 22 February 2002.

CODEx COMMITTEE DISCUSSES TRACEABILITY. The issue of traceability was one of the points of discussion at the Codex Committee on Food Import and Export Inspection and Certification Systems (CCFICS) that met in Brisbane, Australia, on 25 February to 1 March (see also BRIDGES Weekly, 3 February 2002; <http://www.ictsd.org/weekly/02-03-05/story4.htm>), based on a discussion paper prepared by the Committee's Secretariat. Many delegates supported CCFICS' involvement in this debate in addition to ongoing work in other Codex fora, including the Codex Committee on General Principles and Codex Ad Hoc Intergovernmental Task Force on Foods Derived from Biotechnology. Disagreement, however, persisted, over whether the use of traceability requirements should focus on food safety issues, as advocated by the US among others, or also on promoting fair trade practices in food, such as for organically produced food, as was argued mainly by the EU. This discussion resembles the ongoing disagreement between the US and EU on the EU proposal on traceability of genetically modified organisms (GMOs; see related story, this issue). The US does not believe that there is enough scientific evidence of threats of GMOs to human health to justify traceability requirements based on food safety concerns.

The issue of traceability had already divided delegates in previous Codex meetings, most notably at the Codex Ad Hoc Intergovernmental Task Force on Foods Derived from Biotechnology (see BRIDGES Weekly, 3 April 2001, <http://www.ictsd.org/html/weekly/03-04-01/inbrief.htm>) and will also feature at the current meeting of the Task Force (4-8 March 2002). The CCFICS instructed a working group led by Switzerland to prepare a discussion paper on this issue for its next meeting. Documents of the CCFICS meeting are available at http://www.codexalimentarius.net/ccfics10/fc02_01e.htm.

ICTSD Internal Files.

UK COMMISSION ON IPRS BRINGS TOGETHER EXPERTS, ACTIVISTS AND INDUSTRY. The U.K. Commission on Intellectual Property Rights hosted a public conference in London from 21-22 February.

In attendance were over 200 participants representing a wide range of views on intellectual property, trade and development. Among the themes covered were agriculture and genetic resources, and traditional knowledge and folklore. The latter theme is the subject of discussions taking place at the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), and is also being examined by the World Trade Organization's Council for TRIPS. The Commission was set up by the U.K. government to consider how intellectual property rights (IPRs) can help developing countries and the poor. The Commission, consisting of five international experts, has held a series of workshops and consultations, and conducted several fact-finding missions to developing countries. It has also commissioned a series of papers covering a wide range of IPR-related development issues. In June this year, the Commission will submit its report to Clare Short, the U.K. Secretary of State for International Development.

Summary reports of conference are available at <http://www.iisd.ca/linkages/sd/sdipr/> or <http://www.iprcommission.org/meetings.asp?primary=39> Background papers for the conference and other documents are available at <http://www.iprcommission.org/meetingsIndex.asp>

Events & Resources

EVENTS

For a more comprehensive list of events in trade and sustainable development, please refer to ICTSD's web calendar at <http://www.ictsd.org/html/calendar.htm>. For further information on WTO events, contact the WTO Information and Media Relations Division, Geneva; tel: (41-22) 739 5007; fax: 739 5458; email: enquiries@wto.org.

Coming up in the next two weeks

4-8 March, Yokohama, Japan: 3RD SESSION OF THE CODEX AD HOC INTERGOVERNMENTAL TASK FORCE ON FOODS DERIVED FROM BIOTECHNOLOGY. Organised by the joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Programme. The Intergovernmental Task Force will, inter alia, evaluate the safety and nutrition aspects of foods derived from biotechnology, and consider the Draft Principles for the Risk Analysis of Foods derived from Modern Biotechnology. For further information, contact the Secretariat of the Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Programme, FAO, tel: (39 06) 5705 1; fax: 5705 4593; email: codex@fao.org; Internet: http://www.codexalimentarius.net/ccfbt3/bt02_01e.htm.

4-9 March, Nairobi, Kenya: BIOTECHNOLOGY, GENOMICS AND PUBLIC HEALTH IN AFRICA. Organised by the African Centre for Technology Studies (ACTS) and University of Toronto. This is the first of a series of one-week executive courses in biotechnology and genomics health policy. The course will focus on the nature of public policies and institutional arrangements to reduce disparities in global health. Lectures and discussions will be on the potential contributions of genomics and biotechnology in improving public health in Africa. For further information, contact Marion Motari, Biopolicy Programme, ACTS, tel: (254 2) 524712; email: M.Motari@cgiar.org; Internet: <http://www.acts.or.ke/Genomics%20Course.htm>

4-15 March, San José, Costa Rica: SECOND MEETING OF THE UNITED NATIONS FORUM ON FORESTS (UNFF2). For further information, contact Ms. Tiina Vähänen; UN Forum on Forests, Department of Social and Economic Affairs, tel: (1 212) 963 3262; fax: 963 4260; email: vahanen@un.org; Internet: <http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/forests.htm>

5-7 March, Geneva, Switzerland: WTO COUNCIL FOR TRADE-RELATED ASPECTS OF INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY RIGHTS. Members will discuss, inter alia, the relationship between the CBD and the WTO; traditional knowledge and folklore; extension of geographical indications; and the review of Article 27.3(b) on the patentability of life forms. BRIDGES Trade BioRes will report on the outcome of this meeting in the forthcoming issue.

8 March, Geneva, Switzerland: WTO COUNCIL FOR TRADE-RELATED ASPECTS OF INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY RIGHTS - SPECIAL SESSION. Members will begin mandated negotiations on a multilateral system for the registration of geographical indications for wines and spirits to be completed in 2003.

11-15 March, Geneva, Switzerland: 46th MEETING OF THE CITES STANDING COMMITTEE. For further information contact CITES Secretariat; tel: (22) 91781 39/40; fax: 797 3417; email: cites@unep.ch; Internet: <http://www.cites.org/eng/cttee/standing/index.shtml>

13-15 March, Vancouver, Canada: 7TH INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE & TRADE FAIR ON BUSINESS AND THE ENVIRONMENT. Organised by GLOBE. The conference will bring together leaders from corporate, industrial and government circles to discuss strategy and source technology in an effort to provide critical information on the key issues and innovative programs that are driving business in the new millennium. For further information contact GLOBE Foundation Canada, tel: (1) 800 274 6097; email: info@globe.apfn.net; Internet: <http://www.globe2002.com>

15 March, Geneva, Switzerland: UNEP WORKSHOP ON THE IMPACTS OF TRADE AND TRADE-RELATED POLICIES ON FISHERIES AND MEASURES REQUIRED FOR THEIR SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT. Organised by the Economics and Trade Branch of UNEP in consultation with the WTO Secretariat, FAO, and the OECD, the workshop aims to provide a forum for informal discussions and consultations between trade and environment officials and international institutions involved in this subject. For further information contact Hussein Abaza, Economics and Trade Branch, UNEP; tel: (4122) 917 8179; fax: 917 8076; email: hussain.abaza@unep.ch; Internet: http://www.unep.ch/etu/etp/events/upcoming/15March_fisheries.htm

15 March, Geneva, Switzerland: WTO COMMITTEE ON TECHNICAL BARRIERS TO TRADE.

16-20 March, Alexandria, Egypt: BIOTECHNOLOGY AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT - VOICES OF THE SOUTH AND NORTH: This international conference is co-sponsored by the Government of Egypt, FAO, UNESCO, World Bank and OECD, among others. The conference will bring together leaders from the developing and the industrialised world from various areas such as science, government, NGOs, the media, farmers groups, philanthropy, academia, the private sector and the civil society. The objective of the event is to cover the multi-faceted dimensions of the biotechnology debate: the scientific, ethical, and safety issues as well as the regulatory, IPR and trade and economic issues. For more information contact: Ismail Serageldin; tel: (203 487) 6024; fax: 6001; email: egyptbiotech@bibalex.org; Internet: <http://www.egyptbiotech.com/>

20-21 March, Geneva, Switzerland: WTO COMMITTEE ON SANITARY AND PHYTOSANITARY MEASURES.

20-21 March, Geneva, Switzerland: WTO COMMITTEE ON TRADE AND ENVIRONMENT.

Other forthcoming events

29-30 March, New Haven, USA: ILLEGAL LOGGING IN THE TROPICS - THE ECOLOGY, ECONOMICS AND POLITICS OF RESOURCE MISUSE. Organised by the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies International Society of Tropical Foresters. The conference will explore the framing of the illegal logging problem, the extent of the problem, its perceived causes, and potential solutions. For further information contact Barbara Bamberger, Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies, tel: (203) 432-5100; email: barbara.bamberger@yale.edu or istf@pantheon.yale.edu; Internet: <http://www.yale.edu/istf/>

15-19 April, Paris France: 17th SESSION OF THE CODEX COMMITTEE ON GENERAL PRINCIPLES. Organised as a joint session by the FAO/WHO Food Standards Programme. The session will, inter alia, address working principles for Risk Analysis. For further information contact the Codex Alimentarius Secretariat; Internet: http://www.codexalimentarius.net/ccgp17/gp02_01e.htm

13-14 May, London, UK: INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN THE NEW ROUND: TRADE, INVESTMENT AND ENVIRONMENT AFTER DOHA. The conference is organised by the Royal Institute of International Affairs, and will discuss the major issues arising from the Doha Declaration and look at what the new round will bring to the debate regarding multilateral environmental agreements, dispute settlement, institutional changes, investment and services, agriculture and fisheries, and the role and position of developing countries. For further information contact Georgina Wright, tel: (44 20) 7957 5700; fax: 7957 5710; email: gwright@riia.org; Internet: <http://www.riia.org/Conferences/conf.html>

6-10 May, Halifax Canada: 30TH SESSION OF THE JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME CODEX COMMITTEE ON FOOD LABELLING. For further information contact the

Secretariat of the Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Programme; tel: (39 06) 57051; fax: 5705 4593; email: codex@fao.org; Internet: http://www.codexalimentarius.net/ccfl30/fl02_01e.htm

RESOURCES

If you have a relevant resource (books, papers, bulletins, etc.) you would like to see announced in this section, please forward a copy or review by the BRIDGES staff to Heike Baumüller, hbaumuller@ictsd.ch. Submissions of publications to ICTSD's documentation centre would also be welcome (contact Matteo Rizzolli, mrizzolli@ictsd.ch).

"The precautionary principle for GM crops," by J. Tait in *AGROLINKS* (2001): 4-6. This paper looks at the state of the EU regulatory system for GM crops, examining in particular the application of the precautionary principle. It is suggested that dealing effectively with the GM crop issue, in Europe and also globally, will require clear guidelines on the circumstances where it is appropriate to require application of the precautionary principle, and also a more balanced approach to its application.

EXPLORING AGRODIVERSITY. By H. Brookfield, published by Columbia University Press, New York, 2001. The book uses case studies from Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Pacific to provide an in-depth analysis of agricultural diversity and explores its history. It also considers the effect of the "gene revolution" on small farmers and reviews the effects of the "green revolution" in Asian countries. In conclusion, it questions whether the diverse agricultural practices employed by small farmers can survive modern pressures and the global ambitions of the biotechnology industry. More information is available online at <http://www.columbia.edu/cu/cup/>. For a review, see http://www.cid.harvard.edu/cidbiotech/featuredpubls/juma_280202.pdf

SECURING THE HARVEST: BIOTECHNOLOGY, BREEDING AND SEED SYSTEMS FOR AFRICAN CROPS. By J. DeVries and G. Toenniessen, published by CABI Publishing, USA, 2001. The book is based on a two-year exploration conducted by the food security theme of The Rockefeller Foundation focusing on the potential for crop genetic improvement to contribute to food security among rural populations in Africa. It provides a critical assessment of the ways in which recent breakthroughs in biotechnology, participatory plant breeding, and seed systems can be broadly employed in developing and delivering more productive crop varieties in Africa's diverse agricultural environments. More information is available online at: http://www.cabi-publishing.org/Bookshop/book_detail.asp?isbn=0851995640. For a review, see http://www.cid.harvard.edu/cidbiotech/featuredpubls/juma_280202.pdf

TRADING AWAY THE LAST ANCIENT FORESTS - THE THREATS TO FORESTS FROM TRADE LIBERALISATION UNDER THE WTO, 2002. The updated version of the Greenpeace study deals with the impacts on forests of further trade liberalisation measures recently adopted by the WTO. The study aims to clarify the dangers as well as show ways to reach solutions to prevent the loss of the world's last remaining forests, in particular ancient forests, pointing to the need to deal with the issue at WTO trade negotiations. The study points out what other international institutions like the UNFF should be doing to ensure that trade supports sustainable forest management. For hard copies or pdf version of the study contact juergen.knirsch@greenpeace.de. A summary of the study is available online at: <http://www.greenpeace.org/politics/wto/Doha/reports/forestsummary.pdf>

"Global Review of Commercialized Transgenic Crops: 2000," by Clive James in *ISAAA BRIEFS*, No. 23, 2001. This publication is the fifth in a series of ISAAA [International Service for the Acquisition of Agri-biotech Applications] Briefs, which characterise the global adoption of commercialised transgenic crops. A global database for the first five-year period for GM crops, 1996 to 2000, is presented and 2000 data is analysed globally, and by country, crop and trait. The article is available at http://www.isaaa.org/publications/briefs/Brief_23.htm

GLOBAL AGRO-ECOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT FOR AGRICULTURE IN THE 21ST CENTURY. By the International Institute of Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA), July 2001. The report assesses future food production capabilities under different climate change scenarios for all countries of the world. The report pinpoints the hot spots where productivity is most likely to be affected by projected climate change. It concludes that the world's 40 poorest nations, with a third of the current global population and over half of the undernourished people in the world, are likely to be hardest hit with more than half of the countries in sub-Saharan Africa, India, Bangladesh and Brazil particularly vulnerable. In addition, while most developed nations are likely to experience moderate to large increases in crop productivity, some (including Belgium, the

Netherlands, the UK and Australia) could experience food production losses. For more information, contact Susannah Elliott: Susannah@igbp.kva.se, tel: (46 6) 6739 556; fax: 1664 05; Internet: http://www.cluster46.com/igbpmeeting/files/Mahendra_Shah.pdf.

THE ATLAS OF ENDANGERED SPECIES: THREATENED PLANTS AND ANIMALS OF THE WORLD. By Richard Mackay. A comprehensive and easy-to-use reference to the species under threat and their habitats, explaining the nature and extent of the threats and why it is so vital to address them. For further information, see <http://www.earthscan.co.uk/asp/bookdetails.asp?key=3601>

"Carbon sinks - counting the molecules sequestered into trees and soils," in CO2 / CLIMATE REPORT, Winter (2001): 1-4. While the inclusion of forest and other biological sinks in meeting emission reduction commitments may provide some countries with important options for reducing the costs of meeting Kyoto commitments, there are a number of important hurdles to be addressed before the methodologies for quantifying and reporting such sinks can be accepted and properly implemented. Several recent reports have provided insights into what these hurdles are and how they might be addressed.

ELECTRONIC RESOURCES

RISK ASSESSMENT SEARCHING MECHANISM (RASM) is an index of the existing risk assessment documents related to official governmental decisions for the release of living modified organisms (LMOs). RASM is currently under development at the ICGEB Biosafety Unit. Following the entry into force of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety, the Searching Mechanism's specific goal will be to provide electronic access to the Parties' decision documents as foreseen by Art. 10 of the Protocol, and to the related risk assessment reports consistent with Annex III and required by Art. 15 and Annex I. RASM is available at <http://www.icgeb.trieste.it/biosafety/rasm.html>. For further information as well as any comment or suggestion, please contact ICGEB at biosafe@icgeb.trieste.it

POSITION VACANCIES

The ETC GROUP (formerly RAFI) is looking for a full-time Programme Manager to begin work as soon as can be mutually-arranged. The application deadline is 1 April. ETC group is an equal opportunity employer and welcomes applications from any serious candidate regardless of where they are living or their formal educational experience. However, candidates must have excellent non-academic English writing skills and a very strong talent for research and strategic thinking. A detailed job description and important information regarding the application process are available on the ETC website at www.etcgroup.org/main.asp

Greenpeace Australia Pacific is seeking to fill the following positions: CAMPAIGNER - Genetic Engineering, CAMPAIGN TEAM LEADER - Genetic Engineering, COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER - Genetic Engineering. Please send a written application, addressing the selection criteria in the job descriptions to Nicolette Armansin, tel. (61 2) 9263 0344; fax 9261 4588; email: Deb.Henderson@au.greenpeace.org or Nicolette.Armansin@au.greenpeace.org; Mail GPO Box 3307, Sydney NSW 2001. Applications close on 17 March 2002. Detailed job descriptions are available at: <http://www.greenpeace.org/~geneng/>

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