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Biotechnology

US FARMERS FEAR EXPORT LOSSES FROM BIOTECH WHEAT

A recent study -- conducted by Iowa State University professor Robert Wisner -- that states that the introduction of Monsanto's Roundup Ready wheat might lead to a 30 to 50 percent drop in wheat exports from the US, has led farmers' organisations and land conservation groups to ask the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) to place a moratorium on the biotech wheat. Meanwhile, Swiss-based agribusiness group Syngenta has applied to start a trial of genetically modified (GM) wheat in Germany.

Farmers' groups file petition against biotech wheat

On behalf of several farmers' and land conversation groups as well as state officials from Montana and North Dakota, the Center for Food Safety filed a petition to the USDA asking it to withhold the approval of Monsanto's biotech wheat, genetically modified to tolerate the herbicide Roundup, until a better understanding of possible environmental and economic risks has been gained. The groups' demand is based on a report by Robert Wisner, who found that prices of hard spring wheat could drop by 33 to 52 percent if Monsanto's herbicide resistant GM variety of spring wheat was introduced. "I'm as interested in technological innovation as any farmer, but I also need to protect the value of my crop," said Tom Wiley, a North Dakota wheat farmer. "We need an economic impact statement so that we can make sure we're not stepping over dollars to get dimes. Simplified weed control isn't worth losing our valuable export markets," he added.

Farmers are concerned that some countries would not allow importation of the GM wheat and that consumers would not buy GM wheat products. Biotech wheat is different from biotech corn or soybeans in the sense that it is primarily used for human food, whereas corn and soy are used for animal feed and additives. Products such as bread, cereals and pasta produced with GM wheat would be labelled as containing GM ingredients because the protein cannot be processed out. Furthermore, wheat farmers are more dependent on exports than corn or soy farmers are, as nearly half of the production goes to Europe and

Japan where the stringency of biotech regulations and consumer concerns have been growing over the last years.

The GM wheat is currently under review by US and Canada and could be approved for commercialisation within two years. Monsanto, however, has pledged that even if the wheat were approved, it would not sell it unless at least the EU and Japan had accepted it. The USDA noted last week that it might impose strict requirements on Monsanto to ensure that it was abiding by its promise. These could include requirements for Monsanto to submit to independent audits "from the top all the way down" to ensure no biotech wheat was being sold, according to David Shipman, deputy administrator for the USDA's Federal Grain Inspection Service. In addition, Monsanto might be asked to sign a statement before every marketing year, committing to not commercialise GM wheat, and the company would need to provide the information necessary for USDA to conduct DNA testing. USDA thereby wants to ensure that the USDA-approved statement saying no biotech wheat is commercialised in the US, which currently accompanies wheat exports, remains correct and credible.

Meanwhile in Europe...

The Swiss agribusiness group Syngenta has requested permission to start trials and plant a test area of 400 square meters in Germany with GM wheat resistant to the fungus fusarium (scab). Tests have already been carried out in Australia, the US and Canada and Syngenta is now seeking to test whether the GM crop can also adapt to farming conditions in Germany. The request for a trial area was sent to the Robert Koch scientific institute and it might take a few weeks before a decision will be made. According to press sources, the release of the GM crop has been preliminary set for 2007. The president of the North Dakota Grain Growers, Bruce Freitag, stated that there was more interest in a wheat that is resistant to the scab fungus than in a GM wheat resistant to herbicides, such as the variety developed by Monsanto, as producers have great difficulties in controlling the fungus and experience great economic losses.

Additional Resources

Petition filed by the Center for Food Safety:

<http://www.centerforfoodsafety.org/li/WheatUSDApetFinalD7.pdf>.

"GMO Spring Wheat: Its potential short-term impacts on U.S. wheat export markets and prices", Robert Wisner, <http://www.worc.org/gmoreport.doc>.

"Against the Grain: The Threat of Genetically Engineered Wheat", November 2002, http://www.greenpeace.ca/e/resource/publications/gmo/wheat_report_11-02.pdf.

"Farmers, Land Groups Seek Moratorium on Biotech Wheat" ENS, 12 March, 2003; "Biotech wheat may cut US exports in half-study" REUTERS, 13 March, 2003; "Syngenta applies for GM wheat trials in Germany" REUTERS, 14 March, 2003; "USDA mulls strict rules for Monsanto biotech wheat," REUTERS, 18 March 2003.

CODEx TASK FORCE ADOPTS FINAL BIOTECH STANDARD

The Codex Ad Hoc Intergovernmental Task Force on Food Derived from Biotechnology at its 11-14 March meeting adopted the Draft Guideline for the Conduct of Food Safety Assessment of Foods Produced Using Recombinant-DNA Microorganisms. This is the last of three draft standards on biotech food adopted by the Task Force, which will be submitted to the Codex Alimentarius Commission in July. The Commission is expected to approve the standards given the consensus expressed in the Task Force.

Codex approves two-fold safety assessment

One of the key outstanding issues resolved at the meeting related to safety assessment requirements, i.e. whether only the genetically modified (GM) micro-organism should be assessed for safety or also the food produced with the aid of the organism. In the end, the US dropped its opposition and agreed to the inclusion

of both types of assessment in the standard. The Guideline furthermore reiterates a footnote already included in the Guidelines for GM plants, stating that "in the foreseeable future, foods derived from modern biotechnology will not be used as conventional counterparts". This statement had been included despite US efforts to define conventional counterparts as including genetically modified foods based on the assumption that the process of genetic modification per se does not make the resulting food product different from conventional foods.

Consumer groups were generally satisfied with the Guideline and in particular with the inclusion of safety assessment requirements for foods produced with GM micro-organisms, which they said was necessary to check for possible unintended effects. Looking at the work of the Task Force overall, they noted that the annex setting out standards for the assessment of possible allergic reactions was the weakest outcome, describing it as a "barely passable" compromise. Specifically, they criticised that the annex did not adequately ensure consumer interests and food safety as it was not based on the recommendations of the joint FAO/WHO expert consultation due to opposition from the US and Canada.

'Product tracing' versus 'traceability'

The Guideline for micro-organisms was largely based on the previously adopted Guideline for safety assessment of foods produced with GM plants. As a result, there was no significant debate in the context of the standard on the traditionally contentious issues, such as precaution and traceability. These issues had deeply divided the Task Force during discussions on Principles for risk analysis of biotech foods at its previous meetings (see BRIDGES Trade BioRes, 21 March 2002; <http://www.ictsd.org/biores/02-03-21/story2.htm>). The divisions were resolved when the Task Force agreed to include the 'tracing of products' (rather than traceability) as a risk management tool in the standards.

Many observers believe that the agreement reached at the Codex meeting might mark a breakthrough in international negotiations on the use of traceability systems and at least partially vindicates the EU's insistence on introducing a labelling and traceability system for genetically modified foods. This view assumes that 'tracing of products' and traceability was the same. The US, however, has reportedly made attempts to distinguish between the two terms, arguing that 'product tracing' was limited to 'one step forward and one step back'. This view is also supported by the food industry, including the International Council of Grocery Manufacturers Associations and the US National Food Processors Association. The latter also advocates that the term traceability should no longer be used within Codex documents. To date, there is no agreed Codex definition for traceability and/or product tracing. The issue will be taken up by the Codex Committee on General Principles that is scheduled to meet from 28 April to 2 May.

This was the last scheduled meeting of the Task Force, even though its mandate could be extended if necessary. The meeting of the Codex Alimentarius Commission will be held from 30 June to 7 July.

Additional Resources

Documents of the meeting: http://www.codexalimentarius.net/ccfbt4/bt03_01e.htm.

Reports of the Joint FAO/WHO Consultation on Foods Derived from Biotechnology:
http://www.who.int/fsf/GMfood/scientific_advice_index.htm.

"Discussion Paper On Traceability/Product Tracing In The Context Of Food Import And Export Inspection And Certification Systems", Codex Alimentarius Commission, September 2002; http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/food-aliment/friia-raai/ip-pi/codex/pdf/e_fc11_07.pdf.

ICTSD reporting; "Comments on CX/FH 02/7," ICGMA, 20 December 2002; "Re: Draft Discussion Paper - CCFICS Working Group on Traceability," NFPA, 5 August 2002.

Agriculture

WTO AGRICULTURE DEADLINE INCREASINGLY OUT OF REACH

The 31 March deadline for finalising the modalities for the current round of agriculture negotiations at the WTO is threatening to slip away as Members continue to remain miles apart in their willingness to liberalise agricultural trade. The first modalities draft presented by Stuart Harbinson, Chair of the special (negotiating) session of the WTO Committee on Agriculture, was met with widespread criticism from all sides. The failure would not bode well for the current round of trade negotiations as agriculture is widely conceived as the make-or-break issue of the talks.

The modalities will set out the scope of the negotiations, the methodology to be followed during the actual process, and the end-results expected in the agriculture negotiations. In practise, negotiators will have to decide which agriculture-related aspect will be addressed in the negotiations, the formulas for tariff and subsidy reductions, as well as timelines and implementation plans.

Following the circulation of the first draft on 12 February, Harbinson issued a revised first draft on 18 March with some pro-developing country modifications, e.g. with respect to tariffs, trade preferences and a special safeguard mechanism for developing countries. The main features of the original draft remained largely unchanged. The US and the Cairns Group of agricultural exporting countries rejected the draft as lacking ambition regarding the proposed cuts in tariffs and trade-distorting support. As Cairns Group member Australia noted that the draft fell far short of substantially cutting "the outrageous levels of domestic support" provided by the EU, the US, Japan and others.

For its part, the EU regarded the draft as "unbalanced, spreading the burden very unevenly amongst developed countries". EU Agriculture Commissioner Franz Fischler expressed disappointment that the pursuit of non-trade concerns (NTC) was not adequately addressed. "Those concerned about enhancing the provision of public goods, from environment to food safety, see their non-trade concerns ignored and their concerns about the potentially negative impact of trade enhanced," he stated. This view was echoed by other 'Friends of Multifunctionality' such as Japan and Switzerland. Harbinson's draft leaves open the question of how NTCs related to food safety and consumer protection, as demanded by the EC, could be addressed. However, Harbinson noted that some NTCs had already "been taken into account in various parts of the present text". For example, the revised draft provides that provisions on environmental programmes under the Green Box would be extended to government payments under animal welfare programmes. Nevertheless, Harbinson recognised that further consideration would need to be given to those issues.

In contrast, several of the major developing countries expressed satisfaction with the draft. The Like-minded Group of countries, which includes India, Kenya and Nigeria, regarded the text as a small victory for the coalition of developing countries that had fought hard in recent years to only open up their markets if their developmental and food security needs were adequately addressed. According to the draft, developing countries would be allowed to denominate a number of "special products with respect to food security, rural development and/or livelihood security concerns," which would be subject to significantly reduced tariff reduction commitments. Least-developed countries would not be required to undertake reduction commitments, although they could be "encouraged to consider making commitments commensurate with their development needs on a voluntary basis".

Due to domestic pressure, both the US and EU will find it difficult to move from their entrenched positions. The European Commission is facing the challenging task of obtaining a broadened negotiating mandate from the 15 EU member states by the next WTO Ministerial meeting in September while at the same battling over the reform of the EU's Common Agriculture Policy (see BRIDGES Trade BioRes, 7 February 2003; <http://www.ictsd.org/biores/03-02-07/story1.htm>). The US, in turn, is facing pressure from Congress and farmers' groups that are expecting USTR Robert Zoellick to negotiate an accord which would "result in a good deal for America's farmers, ranchers and agricultural producers," as expressed by US Senator Chuck Grassley (R-Iowa).

Harbinson called on Members to constructively engage in negotiations during the forthcoming -- and officially the last -- modalities negotiating session taking place from 25 to 31 March, so as to "create the space for establishing modalities in line with the Doha mandate". However, as one source noted, "we would need a wonder to have trading partners agreeing on modalities by end-March". Agriculture will be among the key issues discussed at the next mini-Ministerial, to be held sometime between 28 June and 3 July in Egypt.

Additional Resources

For further information on the agriculture negotiations, including Harbinson's modalities drafts, see http://www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/agric_e/agric_e.htm.

A collection of stories published in BRIDGES Weekly on the ongoing negotiations is available at <http://www.ictsd.org/issarea/ag/news/index.htm>.

"Note On The Harbinson Draft On Modalities In The WTO Agriculture Negotiations", the Danish Research Institute of Food Economics, 11 March 2003, <http://www.foi.dk/engelsk/index.htm>.

ICTSD reporting; "Commission reacts to WTO draft on farm trade liberalisation," EU PRESS RELEASE, 12 February 2003; "Australia rejects revised WTO plan to liberalise Ag trade," DOW JONES, 19 March 2003; "Senate finance blasts EU, 'Harbinson'," WASHINGTON TRADE DAILY, 27 February 2003; "Agriculture: Few changes in second Harbinson Ag draft; Chair faults Members for lack of guidance," WTO REPORTER, 19 March 2003.

In Brief

SUPACHAI: DOHA ROUND PROSPECTS DIM IN SHADOW OF WAR

As the world's attention focussed on the impending war against Iraq, WTO Director-General Supachai Panitchpakdi gave a speech at the Geneva Graduate Institute for International Studies, warning of the negative repercussions in the area of trade that a weakening of multilateralism may bring forth. At the 17 March event, he warned that the war would further harm the already stalling talks. WTO Members would have to "redouble their efforts" after the outbreak of a war to "heal the wounds" and get the trade talks back on track, he said. Other observers have cautioned that the rift on the Iraq war could translate to the trade front. The US and EU are already far apart on issues such as agriculture and genetically modified organisms (GMOs). Supachai also expressed concern that the war would refocus Members' attention on military affairs and away from important trade negotiating deadlines.

"WTO Chief Cites Fears of Impact Of War With Iraq on Global Trade Talks," WTO REPORTER, 18 March 2003; "U.S. policy could threaten international trade, aides warn," NEW YORK TIMES, 15 March 2003.

WORLD FORUM SEEKS SOLUTIONS ON GLOBAL WATER ISSUES IN JAPAN

Ten thousand government officials, representatives of civil society and intergovernmental organisations, industry and water experts have gathered in Kyoto, Shiga and Osaka to attend the third World Water Forum, running from 16 to 23 March. Participants will not debate water issues as such but instead aim to make concrete commitments and recommendations for future action based on experiences and actions taken. Participants will convene in 337 sessions and discuss 18 different topics including good governance, effective management of water resources through increased capacity building efforts, new financing models, targeting vulnerable groups such as women, children and the poor as well as natural disasters such as floods and droughts. The World Water Forum this year coincides with the UN International Year of Freshwater as well as the World Water Day on March 22. Currently delegates are working on a draft Ministerial Declaration, which is to be concluded on Saturday when the Ministerial Conference begins.

"World Water Forum Views Water as a Life and Death Issue," ENS, 17 March 2003.

For further information, see <http://www.world.water-forum3.com/>. For daily coverage see: IISD reporting Services at <http://www.iisd.ca/linkages/sd/3wwf/>.

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>. Please bear in mind that dates and times of WTO meetings are often changed, and that the WTO does not always announce the important informal meetings of the different bodies.

Coming up in the next two weeks

16-23 March, Kyoto, Japan: THIRD WORLD WATER FORUM. This international event organised by the World Water Forum seeks to, inter alia: raise the importance of water on the political agenda; support the deepening of discussions towards the solution of international water issues in the 21st century; formulate concrete proposals and bring their importance to the world's attention; generate political commitment; and provide space not only for expression of opinions in each individual sector, but also for discussions across sectors and regions. A Ministerial Conference will be held during the Forum, where Ministers will work towards framing and adopting a political declaration concerning global water problems. For further information, contact: the Forum Secretariat; tel: (81-3) 5212-1645; fax: email: office@water-forum3.com; Internet: <http://www.worldwaterforum.org>.

22 March, worldwide: WORLD DAY FOR WATER. For further information, see <http://www.waterday2003.org/>.

23-27 March, Zurich, Switzerland: FIFTH INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON ENVIRONMENTAL FUTURE – ENVIRONMENTAL FUTURE OF AQUATIC ECOSYSTEMS. Following the World Day for Water, the ICEF conference will assess threats to resilience and potential changes in 21 major aquatic systems over the next 25 years. For further information, please visit: <http://www.icef.eawag.ch/>.

24-28 & 31 March March, Geneva, Switzerland: SPECIAL SESSION OF THE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE. For further information, contact: the WTO Information and Media Relations Division, Geneva; tel: (41 22) 739- 5007; fax: 739-5458; email: enquiries@wto.org.

24 - 27 March, Manila, Philippines: SECOND INTERNATIONAL TROPICAL MARINE ECOSYSTEM MANAGEMENT SYMPOSIUM. Organised by the International Coral Reef Initiative (ICRI). This event plans to provide an opportunity for managers to engage in multidisciplinary discussions and sharing of experiences and lessons learned to identify gaps and priorities for future management action. For further information, contact: Mr. Robert S. Jara, International Coral Reef Initiative; tel: (63-2) 925-8275; fax: 926-2693; email: secretariat@icriforum.org; Internet: http://tools.coralreef.org/calendar/item.tcl?calendar_id=680.

24-28 March, Poiana Brasov, Romania: STRATEGIES TO STIMULATE AND PROMOTE THE SOUND USE OF WOOD AS A RENEWABLE AND ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY MATERIAL. The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) is hosting this seminar in order to put the issue of sound uses of wood and sustainable patterns of consumption into the broader context of sustainable development. The seminar will address issues related to consumption and markets, as well as promotion of wood. Possible policy options for governments and other stakeholders will also be explored. For more information, please visit: <http://www.unece.org/trade/timber/docs/sem-1/sem-1.htm>.

24-30 March, Wellington, New Zealand: SECOND INTERNATIONAL EXPERT CONSULTATION ON THE ROLE OF PLANTED FORESTS. The meeting will aim to promote the role of planted forests and identify ways to maximize their contribution to global sustainable forest management. For more information, please visit: <http://www.maf.govt.nz/mafnet/unff-planted-forestry-meeting>.

24-28 March, Florence, Italy: ADVANCED RESEARCH AND PROCEDURES IN BIOSAFETY AND RISK ASSESSMENT FOR THE ENVIRONMENTAL RELEASE OF GMOs. The International Center for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology (ICGEB) and the Istituto Agronomico per l'Oltremare (IAO) are co-hosting this meeting to provide a forum through which risk assessment and areas for future scientific

investigation can be discussed. For more information, please visit:
http://www.icgeb.trieste.it/TRAINING/CRS03/BSF_Florence.htm.

24-28 March, Mexico City, Mexico. TRADE AND ENVIRONMENT IN THE AMERICAS 2003. This week-long dialogue on trade and environment in North America and Latin America, presented by the North American Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), features three main events: Public Workshop on NAFTA Chapter 11; Second North American Symposium on Assessing the Environmental Effects of Trade; and the UNEP Capacity Building Meeting on Environment, Trade, and Sustainable Development for the Latin American and Caribbean Region. For further information, contact: Manon Pepin; tel: (+1 514) 350-4305; email: mpepin@ccemtl.org; Internet: <http://www.cec.org/symposium/>.

31 March-3 April: 73RD WORLD CONGRESS OF THE INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SEED CRUSHERS (IASC). This conference will provide the opportunity for ideas to be exchanged regarding the Doha Round of the WTO, consumer concerns about biotechnology, and sustainability. For more information, please visit: <http://www.iasc2003.com.br>.

31 March - 4 April, Rome, Italy: FAO COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE, 17TH SESSION. For further information, contact: FAO, tel: (39) 06-57051; fax: 5705-3152; email: fao-hq@fao.org; Internet: <http://www.fao.org/unfao/bodies/coag/coag17/coag17-e.htm>.

31 March - 3 April, Beijing, China: INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM ON CLIMATE CHANGE. For further information, contact: Dr. Dahe Qin at the China Meteorological Administration; tel: +86 10 68406424; fax: +86 10 62175928; email: ISCC@cma.gov.cn.

1 April, New York, USA: BIODIPLOMACY: GENETIC RESOURCES, GMOs AND INTERNATIONAL POLICYMAKING. Organised by the United Nations University. For further information, contact: Prof A.H. Zakri; tel: (81-3) 5467-2323; fax: 5467-2324; email: zakri@ias.unu.edu; Internet: <http://www.ias.unu.edu>.

1-5 April, Alaska, USA: INTERNATIONAL BERING SEA CONFERENCE. Pacific Environment is hosting this conference to focus on the Bering Sea as a shared international concern for fisheries managers, conservationists, and scientists. While acknowledging the importance of the Bering Sea to the United States and the Russian Federation, the conference will seek to create an action plan to ensure better international cooperation. For more information, please visit: www.pacificenvironment.org/marine/beringconference.htm.

2 - 3 April, Geneva, Switzerland: COMMITTEE ON SANITARY AND PHYTOSANITARY MEASURES. For further information, contact: the WTO Information and Media Relations Division, Geneva; tel: (41-22) 739- 5007; fax: 739-5458; email: enquiries@wto.org.

3 April, Oslo, Norway: MEDICINAL PLANTS: ACCESS, USE AND BENEFIT SHARING IN LIGHT OF THE CBD. Organised by University of Oslo. The event will examine and advance the elaboration of critical terms and concepts of the CBD related to access to genetic resources and benefit sharing. For further information, contact: Ms. Alida Jay Boye, University of Oslo; tel: (47) 2285-8900; fax: 2285-8920; email: alida.boyer@sum.uio.no; Internet: <http://www.sum.uio.no/bioprospecting/cbd.html>.

4 - 6 April, Duke University, USA: INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC GOODS AND TRANSFER OF TECHNOLOGY AFTER THE TRIPS AGREEMENT OF 1994. Organised by the Center for the Study of the Public Domain at Duke Law School. This major conference will focus the attention of leading economic and legal scholars on the bigger picture that is emerging from the upward harmonization of international intellectual property rights (IPRs) since the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) of 1994. For further information, contact: Lynn Martin; tel: (9-19) 613-7206; email: martin@law.duke.edu; Internet: <http://www.law.duke.edu/trips/index.html>.

4 - 6 April, Washington University School of Law, St. Louis, USA: BIODIVERSITY, BIOTECHNOLOGY, AND THE PROTECTION OF TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE. The event will gather key individuals and parties to discuss the protection of biodiversity, the protection and regulation of agricultural and plant biotechnology, and the international intellectual property implications of both, with particular attention to the

protection of traditional knowledge and other intellectual property mechanisms of interest to the developing world. For further information, contact: tel: (314) 935-7988; fax: 935-7961; email: IGLS@wulaw.wustl.edu; Internet: <http://law.wustl.edu/igls/>.

Other forthcoming events

7-11 April, Rome, Italy: INTERIM COMMISSION ON PHYTOSANITARY MEASURES 5TH MEETING. Members of the United Nations' Food and Agricultural Organization (FOA) will gather with contracting parties to the International Plant Protection Convention (ICPM) to discuss phytosanitary issues. For further information, visit: <http://www.ippc.int/IPP/En/Archive/Icpm5/ICPM5.htm>.

7 - 11 April, Colorado, USA: INTERNATIONAL WORKSHOP ON INTEGRATED WATER RESOURCES MANAGEMENT. The United States Bureau of Reclamation is hosting this workshop to provide an overview of planning and management practices, evaluate inter-organizational cooperation, and demonstrate actual procedures, facilities, and techniques used in integrated water resources management. For more information, visit: <http://www.usbr.gov>.

9 April, Loughborough University, UK: ACHIEVING SUSTAINABILITY: POVERTY ELIMINATION AND THE ENVIRONMENT. This event plans to assess the question, can environmental improvements lead to poverty reduction or they are a burden on the poor? For further information, contact: Dr. Lois Child; tel/fax: (44) 509-222-558; email: L.E.Child@lboro.ac.uk; Internet: http://www.lboro.ac.uk/research/cens/pov_sem.html.

9 - 11 April, Djerba, Tunisia: FIRST INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON CLIMATE AND TOURISM. Organised by World Tourism Organization. For further information, contact: Mr. Francesco Frangiali; tel: (34-91) 567-8100; fax: 567-8218; email: omtweb@world-tourism.org; Internet: <http://www.world-tourism.org>.

22 - 25 April, Geneva, Switzerland: 49th MEETING OF THE CITES STANDING COMMITTEE. Organised by Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora. For further information, contact: tel: (41-22) 917-8139/40; fax: 797-3417; email: cites@unep.ch; Internet: <http://www.cites.org/eng/notifs/2003/004.shtml>.

24 - 25 April, Geneva, Switzerland: SPECIAL SESSION OF THE COUNCIL FOR TRADE-RELATED ASPECTS OF INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY RIGHTS. For further information, contact: the WTO Information and Media Relations Division, Geneva; tel: (41-22) 739- 5007; fax: 739-5458; email: enquiries@wto.org.

28 April - 9 May: COMMISSION ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT 11TH SESSION. For further information, contact: tel: (2-12) 963-0902; fax 963-4260; email: dsd@un.org; Internet: http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/csd11/csd11_2003.htm.

Course

31 March - 4 April, London, England: CLIMATE CHANGE: SCIENCE, IMPACTS AND RESPONSES. This course, arranged by Imperial College, will consist of five one-day modules presented by leading experts to provide in-depth coverage of climate change issues. For further information, contact: Imperial College; tel: (44 20) 7594-6882/6884/6886; fax: 7594 6883; email: cpd@imperial.ac.uk; Internet: <http://www.imperial.ac.uk/cpd/climate.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.

"AGRICULTURAL BIOTECHNOLOGY: WILL IT HELP?" By the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations in FOCUS (March 2003). This article takes a brief look at the environmental and health related benefits and costs related to the use of agricultural biotechnology. Available at <http://www.fao.org/english/newsroom/focus/2003/gmo1.htm>.

REFORMING AGRICULTURAL MARKETS IN AFRICA. By Mylene Kherallah et al, Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002. In this book, the authors analyse the effects that economic reform in the agricultural sector in Africa have had in the past twenty years, specifically focusing on food crop, fertilizer, and export crop markets. The book evaluates the extent to which these reforms have been implemented and explains how economic constraints have limited these processes. It goes on to suggest that improvements in non-agricultural sectors and the governmental promotion of the involvement of private institutions are necessary in order for agricultural reform to have a greater effect. For more information on this resource, see <http://www.ifpri.org/pubs/jhu/refagmarafr.htm>.

SELLING FOREST ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES: MARKET-BASED MECHANISMS FOR CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT. By Stefano Pagjola, Joshua T. Bishop and Natasha Landell-Mills, IIED, 2002. Although the use of market-based mechanisms for the conservation of forests have been considered, their implementation has been difficult. This book uses the results of extensive research to construct a realistic plan for the implementation of a payment system and evaluates its effectiveness, as well as the implications it would have on the poor. For further information, see <http://www.earthprint.com/show.htm>.

AMBER WAVES. This new magazine, produced by the Economic Research Service of the US Department of Agriculture, covers the research of the agency on the economics of agriculture, food, rural America, trade, and the environment. It is replacing Agricultural Outlook, Food Review, and Rural America and will be published five times per year. For more information, see <http://www.ers.usda.gov/Features/NewMag/>.

Electronic Resources

WATER-L (International Institute for Sustainable Development). A news and announcement list related to the 3rd World Water Forum and water policy issues. To subscribe, visit <http://iisd.ca/scripts/lyris.pl?join=water-l>.

OUTCOMES OF DISCUSSIONS ON THE GUIDANCE DOCUMENT FOR THE RISK ASSESSMENT OF GENETICALLY MODIFIED PLANTS AND DERIVED FOOD AND FEED. By the European Commission on Food Safety, 2003. The European Commission's Scientific Steering Committee has released a website containing its opinions on risk assessments of GM plants used in food and feed. The site also features the latest version of a guidance document for the risk assessment of GM plants and derived food and feed that was initially released in September 2002. The guidance document was designed to assist organisations that apply for authorisation to commercially release GM plants that are to be used in human food, animal feed, or medicinal products in EU member states. To access this site, visit: http://europa.eu.int/comm/food/fs/sc/ssc/outcome_en.html.

IUCN ENVIRONMENTAL LAW PROGRAMME PORTALS: GMO PORTAL. This portal is designed to enable comments and feedback to the IUCN Council regarding the draft IUCN background/scoping paper entitled "Biosafety and Genetically Modified Organisms: Background for the Enunciation of an IUCN Position and Plan of Action." It is open to IUCN Members and to members of any of IUCN's six Commissions. For more information, see: <http://www.iucn.org/portal/elc/>.

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