



Bridges Trade BioRes

News, events and resources at the intersection of trade and biodiversity

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Fisheries.....	1
WTO Fisheries Subsidies Talks Move Forwards.....	
Environment at the WTO	2
Environmental Goods Dominate CTE Agenda.....	
Intellectual Property	3
Fault Lines Surface At Access And Benefit Sharing Negotiations	
Biotechnology	4
Latin American Gmo Update: Mexico, Brazil, Paraguay	
In Brief.....	5
Events & Resources.....	7

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Fisheries

WTO FISHERIES SUBSIDIES TALKS MOVE FORWARDS

Fisheries subsidies negotiations at the WTO Negotiating Group on Rules on 21-23 February focused on a new submission by Japan -- this time officially supported by Korea and Chinese Taipei -- outlining further details on its approach to developing subsidies disciplines. Many observers

expressed cautious optimism regarding the progress of the talks, but also stressed that much work remained to be done to hammer out the details of possible disciplines, in particular how they will deal with special and differential treatment (S&DT) for developing countries.

In their submission (TN/RL/W/172, available at <http://docsonline.wto.org/>), Japan, Korea and Chinese Taipei criticised the proposal put forward by the "Friends of Fish" (Argentina, Chile, Ecuador, New Zealand, the Philippines and Peru) in November last year (see Bridges Trade BioRes, 19 November 2004, <http://www.ictsd.org/biores/04-11-19/story2.htm>). Specifically, they argued that starting with a broad prohibition on subsidies that benefit the fishing industry, as proposed by the six countries, which would, inter alia, be inconsistent with basic principles of the Agreements on Subsidies and Countervailing Measures, limit flexibility in the use of policy tools in a changing environment, and by eliminating an effect test would differentiate fisheries from other sectors which are disciplined based on their trade impacts.

The submission went on to further elaborate on Japan's previous proposal (see Bridges Trade BioRes, 11 June 2004, <http://www.ictsd.org/biores/04-06-11/story3.htm>). The countries note that all fisheries subsidies deemed to directly cause serious harm to the resources should be prohibited ("red box" subsidies), including subsidies for capacity enhancement of fishing vessels and those relating to illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing. Notably, the new proposal does not include Japan's previous caveat that capacity-related subsidies would only be prohibited for vessels engaged in poorly managed fisheries, instead simply stating that resource management issues should be considered in the negotiations.

Regarding "green box" (non-actionable) subsidies, the submission would like to see those included that have positive effects on fish stock recovery, social security, welfare and research & development. The submission also called for some flexibility for all countries to protect their small-scale subsistence fisheries and for developing countries in the application of prohibited subsidies.

Despite the submission's critical stance on the "Friends of Fish" approach, even those on the other side of the debate saw the new proposal as a "fairly big step forward" and a significant improvement over the previous one with fewer qualifications on "red box" subsidies. The "green box", however, while appearing lighter than before, was still seen as requiring further clarification. Several observers also welcomed Korea's and Chinese Taipei's support for the proposal and thus their official recognition of the need for disciplining fisheries subsidies. New Zealand, however, wondered how the countries planned to address the "grey area", i.e. subsidies that did not clearly fall in either of the two categories, and how this approach would help achieve greater transparency of subsidies programmes.

Many felt that the proposal marked sufficient progress to allow countries to put aside continued differences over the broad approach (i.e. bottom-up, as proposed by Japan, Korea and Chinese Taipei, versus top-down, as proposed by the "Friends of Fish") and instead get down to discussions on the actual details and substance of the subsidies programmes. Members generally recognised the need to address the special concerns of developing countries, in particular small and vulnerable states as highlighted in an earlier submission by the small island developing states. However, some developed countries expressed concerns that S&DT provisions could be used by some of the bigger developing countries to create major fleets, thereby undermining the objectives of the disciplines. In this context, Brazil noted that the disciplines should not prohibit the country to build its own fleet to exploit its national waters within sustainable limits. Brazil and India said they would submit proposals on S&DT shortly.

The next meeting of the Negotiating Group is currently scheduled for 11-13 April.

ICTSD reporting.

Environment at the WTO

ENVIRONMENTAL GOODS DOMINATE CTE AGENDA

Delegates at the special session of the Committee on Trade and Environment (CTE) on 24-25 February focused their discussions almost entirely on environmental goods, with new submissions by Korea, New Zealand and the EC. Several of the developed countries urged Members to pick up the pace with the aim of agreeing on a list by the Hong Kong Ministerial Conference, raising some resistance among developing countries who argued that so far they could see nothing of interest to them coming out of the negotiations.

The short regular session of the CTE on 22 February, preceded by informal consultations, focused on how to structure discussions under paragraph 32(i) regarding the effects of environmental measures on market access. Members also agreed to hold a workshop on paragraph 51 in October 2005.

EC submission proves controversial

The EC submission (TN/TE/W/47) met with greatest resistance, in particular the suggestion to not only include goods used in pollution control and resource management, but also "goods that have a high environmental performance or low environmental impacts". The EC acknowledged that some of these products might need to be defined through standards, which require certification, proposing to use schemes included in the existing international network Global Ecolabelling Network. The proposal was widely rejected by many developing countries who resisted the inclusion of PPM-based environmental goods as well as eco-labels. The EC expressed disappointment with the negative reception, noting that at this point few alternatives had been put forward. They also stressed that not all environmentally preferable products would necessarily be distinguished on the basis of PPMs.

Among the three new proposals, Korea's submission (TN/TE/W/48) attracted most support as a practical way forward. Korea stressed the need for "practical and simple" criteria for the identification of environmental goods, suggesting a number of criteria they had used to draw up their proposed list. These include that the end use of the products should be primarily for an environmental

purpose, that products should be classifiable under the HS code and that environmentally preferable products and goods that are defined by the process and production methods (PPM) or their superior environmental performance should be excluded "for practical reasons". The submission also includes a proposed list of 89 products primarily related to "pollution management".

In its generally well-received submission (TN/TE/W/47), New Zealand suggested to use certain "reference points" that could be cited to initiate "a discussion about the environmental credential of a specific good", such as the OECD definition of environmental industries, APEC's conceptualisation of environmental goods or approaches to environmental goods agreed through "high quality and comprehensive regional or bilateral Free Trade Agreements". Several delegations remained sceptical regarding the use of FTAs, questioning in particular what was meant by a "high quality" FTA. New Zealand also supported the US' proposal to identify a 'core list' and a complementary list of goods (see Bridges Trade BioRes, 30 April 2004, <http://www.ictsd.org/biores/04-04-30/story1.htm>). Such lists should be "living lists", New Zealand suggested, which could be updated at a later stage to respond to the dynamic nature of environmental goods. Several Members requested further clarification on how a living list would work and how long it would continue to "live".

The Committee discussed the possibility of holding another intersessional meeting in addition to the two scheduled meetings. In particular the developed countries would like to see the list finalised by the Hong Kong Ministerial meeting in December. Many of the developing countries, however, resisted pressure to speed up the discussion and set concrete deadlines, expressing concerns that the negotiations so far did not contain anything of interest to them. Canada urged these countries to come forward with their proposed lists, including goods of interest to them.

On paragraph 31(i) regarding the MEA-WTO relationship, the Secretariat presented its revised Matrix of trade measures in MEAs (http://www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/envir_e/mea_database_e.htm). Little discussion took place on this negotiating item.

Regular CTE session

At the regular session of the CTE, the Chair presented a proposal for how to structure the discussions under paragraph 32(i), suggesting four main issues that have been raised by delegations during discussions: using a sectoral approach to considering the effect of environmental measures on market access by identifying sector-specific environmental requirements which impact export performance; "process issues" in the areas of transparency, notification and consultation procedures when preparing an environmental regulation; technical assistance to assist developing countries in compliance with new environmental requirements; and issues concerning the preparation of environmental measures.

Members also agreed to hold a workshop on paragraph 51 (which mandates the CTE and the Committee on Trade and Development to ensure that sustainable development is adequately reflected in the negotiations) on 10-11 October, but failed to adopt the proposed agenda for the meeting. Qatar, supported by Venezuela, suggested that energy-related issues should be discussed in this context.

For a collection of trade and environment-related submissions, see <http://www.trade-environment.org/page/theme/tewto/wtosubmissions.htm>.

ICTSD reporting.

Intellectual Property

FAULT LINES SURFACE AT ACCESS AND BENEFIT SHARING NEGOTIATIONS

Delegates at the Convention on Biological Diversity's (CBD) Ad hoc Open-ended Working Group on Access and Benefit-sharing (ABS), convening from 14 to 18 February in Bangkok, Thailand, used the meeting to further clarify their positions on the objectives and nature of an international regime on ABS. The Working Group had been mandated by the seventh CBD Conference of the Parties (COP-7) Decision VII/19 to initiate negotiations on an international regime on ABS (see Bridges Trade BioRes, 20 February 2004, <http://www.ictsd.org/biores/04-02-20/story1.htm>). Divisions among the providers and users of genetic resources were plainly evident during the discussions, revealing a wide range of expectations and understandings of the need for and scope of the new regime.

Countries that are largely providers of genetic resources, such as the African Group, the Like-minded Megadiverse Countries (LMC) and other developing countries, called for a legally-binding international agreement that would prevent the misappropriation and misuse of genetic resources and their derivatives, ensure fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from their use and protect traditional knowledge. Several developing countries stressed that the new agreement should complement, rather than substitute, national access and benefit-sharing legislation. Additional norms at the international level, however, were needed to support compliance with national legislation since no judicial remedies currently exist for cases where ABS arrangements or legislations of provider countries are not respected once the genetic resources have left the country. Provider countries also called for the inclusion of both genetic resources and their derivatives in the scope of the regime -- a proposal rejected by a number of developed countries.

Countries that are primarily users of genetic resources, such as Canada, the US and the EU, maintained that further analysis of experiences with existing national, regional and international ABS instruments and processes (a 'gap analysis') was needed as a prerequisite for defining the scope of the regime. Many developing countries, however, noted that the gaps were already known, namely to prevent unauthorised access and use of genetic resources and traditional knowledge, and that in any case the gap analysis could be carried out in parallel to and thereby inform the negotiations. The final recommendation adopted by the Working Group recognises the utility of the analysis of existing instruments prepared for the meeting (UNEP/CBD/WG-ABS/3/2) and supports employing the same analysis with respect to the potential additional elements and options to be identified.

The final document also presents six options submitted by Parties regarding the nature, scope, objectives and elements of the future regime. A number of visions are presented regarding the objectives of the new regime, including preventing misappropriation of genetic resources; protecting traditional knowledge; facilitating access to genetic resources; supporting national legislation; promoting the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity; and ensuring mutual supportiveness with other international instruments.

The next meeting of the Working Group on ABS will be held from 13-17 March 2006 in Spain.

Additional Resources

Documents of the meeting are available <http://www.biodiv.org/meetings/abswg-03/default.shtml>.

For daily reporting, see IISD Linkages, <http://www.iisd.ca/biodiv/abs-wg3/>.

ICTSD Reporting; ENB Vol. 9 No. 311, 21 February 2005; "CBD Launches new negotiations," BANGKOK POST NEWS, 16 February 2005.

Biotechnology

LATIN AMERICAN GMO UPDATE: MEXICO, BRAZIL, PARAGUAY

Mexican Senate approves biotech bill

The Mexican Senate passed legislation authorising the planting and sale of genetically modified (GM) crops on 15 February. The law was drafted by the Senate in early 2003 with input from the Mexican Academy of Sciences (AMC) and approved in April of that year (see BRIDGES Trade BioRes, 1 May 2003, <http://www.ictsd.org/biores/03-05-01/story2.htm>). Following some revisions, the law was approved by the lower house of Congress on 16 December 2004 (see BRIDGES Trade BioRes, 20 December 2004, <http://www.ictsd.org/biores/04-12-20/story3.htm>) and was sent way back to the Senate. The new legislation does not grant approval for any GM crop per se, but rather sets out a process and framework for such approval to be granted in the future, attempts to address the conservation of genetic resources, calls for a yet-to-be-established special protection regime for varieties of maize native to Mexico, and requires all GM products to be labelled according to guidelines that will be issued by the Ministry of Health. It is expected that Mexican President Vicente Fox will sign the bill into law soon.

A number of critics spoke out against the law, including René Drucker, coordinator of scientific research at Mexico's National University and former president of the AMC, who said that the law would bring no benefits to Mexico. In addition, seventy researchers published a statement in the 8 December edition of Mexico's *La Jornada* saying that it was regrettable that the NAFTA Commission for Environmental Cooperation recommendations

on GM regulation in Mexico had been ignored (see BRIDGES Trade BioRes, 19 November 2004, <http://www.ictsd.org/biores/04-11-19/story3.htm>).

Brazil's lower house passes biosafety bill

On 2 March the lower house of the Brazilian Congress passed a controversial legislation that establishes a regulatory framework to legalise the sale and use of GM crops. The bill, which was originally approved by the lower house in February 2004 and approved with amendments by the Senate in October (see BRIDGES Trade BioRes, 23 September 2004, <http://www.ictsd.org/biores/04-09-23/story3.htm>), will strengthen the power of the National Technical Committee on Biotechnology (CTNBio) to approve applications for biotech crops. Greenpeace criticised the decision, saying that science and technology experts are over-represented in CTNBio to the exclusion of government officials specialising in the environment. Brazil's farm research cooperative Codetec was confident that the passing of the law would lead to a rapid end at least to the ban GM soy. "The ban on GMOs has deprived Brazil of certain advantages that have long been enjoyed by our competitors such as the United States and Argentina," said Ivo Carraro, Codetec's Executive Director. Approximately 30 percent of Brazilian soy is already grown from GM seeds as a result of illegal plantings, a phenomenon that had been accommodated through a series of provisional decrees authorising the planting of the GM soy (see BRIDGES Trade BioRes, 3 October 2003, <http://www.ictsd.org/biores/03-10-03/story2.htm>). The new law will go into effect once signed by Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, expected later this month.

Paraguay to pay Monsanto royalties for soy

The Agriculture Ministry of Paraguay on 2 March approved an agreement signed by soy farmers, seed producers, cooperatives and exporters from across the country to pay US biotechnology company Monsanto royalties for the use of their seeds. Paraguay is the world's fourth-largest soybean exporter of which approximately 60 percent is believed to be genetically modified. Farmers in Paraguay, along with neighbouring Brazil and Argentina, have for years been harvesting Monsanto's Roundup Ready soybeans without paying royalties. This practice will end in Paraguay with the signing of the agreement, where farmers

have agreed to pay US\$ 2.82 per sack of seed that will sow approximately one hectare. The Paraguayan government legalised four new varieties of GM soybeans developed by Monsanto in October 2004.

"Brazil opens way for GMO crops, stem cell research," REUTERS, 3 March 2005; "Brazil OKs Law to Legalize Biotech Crops," AP, 3 March 2005; "Paraguay agrees to pay Monsanto royalties for soy," REUTERS, 3 March 2005; "Mexico approves planting and sale of GM crops," SCIDEV, 22 February 2005; "Mexico to OK gene-altered crops," KNIGHT RIDDER, 21 February 2005; "Paraguay gives green light for GMO soy," REUTERS, 21 October 2004.

In Brief

'ROUGH ROW' ERUPTS OVER SUBSIDIES ON CULTURAL GOODS

European and several developing country representatives clashed with the United States, Japan, Mexico and India on subsidies to protect cultural diversity at a UNESCO meeting held from 31 January to 14 February in Paris. The second session of the intergovernmental meeting of experts on the Preliminary Draft Convention on the Protection of the Diversity of Cultural Contents and Artistic Expressions convened to negotiate the Convention, which was mandated by a UNESCO General Council decision in 2003. European countries along with many developing countries want an international agreement that would allow state subsidies for national cultural 'products' such as cinema, music and books, and would allow for the taxation of imports of foreign films, music and television programmes. However, talks broke out into what a Caribbean participant described as a "rough row" when the United States and others opposed such protection. At dispute in particular was the drafting of Article 19, which says that signatories would have the right to subsidise "cultural products" such as an emerging local audiovisual sector, or a particular music or film production, and that the right granted by the binding convention would override any other agreements. This would imply that the right to subsidise cultural products in the UNESCO agreement would supersede WTO disciplines on subsidies and other measures if the article and convention were signed, turning cultural products into an exception from WTO rules.

Another round of negotiations will be held at the intergovernmental meeting of experts planned for late May. UNESCO hopes to have a text prepared in advance of its general assembly in October 2005.

The Preliminary Draft Convention is available at: http://portal.unesco.org/culture/en/file_download.php/0e1c3c582c2fdd0a55c4c1bfe6f65ce0REVISED+TEXT+-+Cultural+div.pdf

"Rough Row' Breaks Out on Diversity," IPS, 18 February 2005.

US, CAFTA-DR SIGN ENVIRONMENTAL ACCORDS

The US, five Central American nations (Costa Rica, Honduras, Nicaragua, El Salvador and Guatemala) and the Dominican Republic signed two environmental agreements associated with the free trade agreement (Central American Free Trade Agreement-Dominican Republic, CAFTA-DR) that the seven countries concluded in August 2004. The "'Environmental Cooperation Agreement' outlines a framework for environmental cooperation among countries to improve environmental protection in the region. The 'Understanding Regarding the Establishment of a Secretariat for Environmental Matters' establishes a secretariat charged with administering a public submissions process for complaints regarding the enforcement of national environmental laws. Some civil society groups saw the environmental provisions as "a positive precedent in the efforts for environmental protection in Central America", and policymakers predicted it would ease the debate within the US Congress on approval of CAFTA-DR. Others, however, were more sceptical. Angel Ibarra, president of the Salvadoran Ecological Unit, described the environmental clauses as "pure rhetoric, because there are no mechanisms or measures that require countries to protect their natural resources", warning that CAFTA-DR would instead result in ecological damage.

The texts of the FTA and the agreements are available at <http://www.trade-environment.org/page/legal/regional.htm>.

ICTSD reporting; "The 'Green' Promises of CAFTA," INTER PRESS SERVICE, 17 February 2005; "US, CAFTA countries sign environmental deals," REUTERS, 18 February 2005.

COUNTRIES DIVIDED OVER REGULATING MERCURY AT UNEP COUNCIL

Delegates meeting for the 23rd session of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) Governing Council (GC) on 21-25 February in Nairobi, Kenya, were unable to agree on the need for a legally binding international instrument

governing mercury. While Switzerland, Norway and the EU supported calls for a binding instrument to constrain production and trade of the lethal chemical, the US, Australia and Japan said that they preferred voluntary partnerships. The G77/China opposed holding negotiations on a binding agreement now, saying that many developing countries had little understanding of the mercury problem or the capacity to address it and that UNEP's SAICM (Strategic Approach to Integrated Chemicals Management) process has not yet been finalised. In their final decision (UNEP/GC.23/CW/L.4), the 136 countries represented at the meeting asked UNEP Executive Director Klaus Töpfer to prepare a report that summarised supply, trade and demand information on mercury for the 24th GC meeting -- a move that sources speculate may be a first step towards an international agreement on mercury -- and urged governments to undertake partnerships to reduce mercury emissions.

For daily reporting, see IISD Linkages, <http://www.iisd.ca/unepegc/23gc/>.

ICTSD Reporting; "Governments Move to Assess and Control Mercury Pollution," ENS, 25 February 2005; ENB Vol. 16 No. 47, 28 February 2005.

TROPICAL TIMBER CONFERENCE CONTINUES SCOPE DEBATE

The United Nations Conference for the Negotiation of a Successor Agreement to the International Tropical Timber Agreement (ITTA) 1994, convening for their second meeting from 14-16 February in Geneva, failed to make headway on discussions relating to the scope and financial basis of the new agreement. Based upon debates started at first round of negotiations (see BRIDGES Trade BioRes, 6 August 2004, <http://www.ictsd.org/biores/04-08-06/story2.htm>), discussions on the Preamble and Objectives of the agreement were divided between countries, such as Norway, who supported a broadening of the scope to include coniferous tropical wood, non-timber forest products and ecological services, and those who opposed broadening, such as the EU, owing to concerns that it could lead to overlap with other multilateral agreements, change the ITTA from a commodity agreement to a multilateral environmental agreement and would be unlikely to contribute to poverty alleviation. The ITTA is a commodity agreement negotiated under the auspices of the United Nations Conference on Trade and

Development that explicitly recognises the need to balance conservation and sustainable use of tropical forests. A third round of negotiations on the successor agreement will be held from 27 June - 1 July in Geneva. Negotiators hope to complete negotiations as soon as possible although the official deadline is 31 December 2006, when the ITTA 1994 expires.

For daily reporting, see IISD Linkages, <http://www.iisd.ca/forestry/itto/itta2/>.

ICTSD Reporting; ENB Vol. 24 No. 57, 21 February 2005.

FOOD TRANSPORT HURTS ENVIRONMENT, REPORT FINDS

Buying locally grown food is an effective way to reduce climate change, according to a new study by Professor Jules Pretty of Essex University and Tim Lang of London's City University published on 2 March. The study shows that while only a small percentage of international trade in food travels by sea or plane, the road distribution, storage and packaging practices in developed countries leads to substantial environmental costs as a result of food transportation. Focusing on Britain, the report suggests that food today travels 65 percent further than it did two decades ago and that if all of our food came from within 20km of where we live we could save GB£2.1bn a year in environmental and congestion costs. It also points out that so-called "food swaps", where large quantities of similar products such as milk or meat are exported and imported by the same quantity, does not make environmental sense. In creating and analysing the idea of "food miles", the authors argue that the appropriate action to take is not to stop international trade entirely, but rather to enact radical reforms of transport systems in developed countries. "Food miles are more important than we thought and buying local is more important than buying green," Professor Pretty said at the Science Media Centre in London. While converting all of Britain's farms to organic agriculture would save GB£1.1bn a year, they said, the "environmental cost" of food transportation is some GB£2.1bn a year.

To access the report visit <http://www.sciencedirect.com>

"Buy local produce and save the world: why food costs £4bn more than we think," THE INDEPENDENT, 3 March 2005; "Think Global and Buy Local Say British Food Gurus," REUTERS, 3 March 2005.

Events & Resources

EVENTS

For a more comprehensive list of events in trade and sustainable development, please refer to ICTSD's web calendar, <http://www.trade-environment.org/page/calendar.htm>.

Coming up in the next two weeks

7-11 March, Rome, Italy: 26TH SESSION OF THE FAO COMMITTEE ON FISHERIES. This session will discuss, among other issues, the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries and Related International Plans of Action, capture fisheries and the fish trade. For further information contact Ndiaga Gueye, tel: (+39 65) 705 28 47; fax: 705 65 00; email: ndiaga.gueye@fao.org; Internet: ftp://ftp.fao.org/FI/DOCUMENT/COFI/COFI_26/default.htm.

8-10 March, Hong Kong, China: PRACTICAL SOLUTIONS TO COMBAT ILLEGAL LOGGING: INTERNATIONAL DIALOGUE ON BEST PRACTICE FOR BUSINESS AND CIVIL SOCIETY. This initiative is being organised by The Forest Dialogue of Yale University, in collaboration with various other organisations and agencies such as The Nature Conservancy and the World Wildlife Fund. The dialogue aims to: raise awareness amongst business leaders of the problems posed by illegal logging, identify solutions and agree on how participants can work together for widespread adoption of these resolutions. For further information contact Gary Dunning, tel: +1 203 432 5966; fax: +1 203 432 3809; email: info@theforestdialogue.org; Internet: <http://research.yale.edu/gisf/tfd/logging.html>.

8-10 March, Geneva: WTO 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: (41-22) 739-5458; email: enquiries@wto.org

9-10 March, Geneva: COMMITTEE ON SANITARY AND PHYTOSANITARY MEASURES. For further information contact the WTO Information and Media Relations Division, Geneva; tel: (41-22) 739- 5007; fax: (41-22) 739-5458; email: enquiries@wto.org

10 March, Geneva: WORLD BANK SEMINAR FOR SPS COMMITTEE. For further information contact the WTO Information and Media Relations Division, Geneva; tel: (41-22) 739- 5007; fax: (41-22) 739-5458; email: enquiries@wto.org

11-13 March, Coventry, UK: THE GLOBALISATION OF AGRICULTURAL BIOTECHNOLOGY: MULTI-DISCIPLINARY VIEWS FROM THE SOUTH.

Organised by the Centre for the Study of Globalisation and Regionalisation at the University of Warwick. In analysing agricultural biotechnology it is useful to recognise that it is not just a technology and that technology in itself is not a panacea to the challenges facing world agriculture. Much like the Green Revolution, though with distinct socio-political and techno-economic differences, this is a technological system that is being globalised. This workshop will look at these issues and bring forward regional perspectives from the South. For further information contact Dwijen Rangnekar, tel: (+44 24) 7652 8906; fax: 7657 2548; email: d.rangnekar@warwick.ac.uk; Internet: <http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/csgr/>

14-16 March, Montreal, Canada: COMPLIANCE COMMITTEE UNDER THE CARTAGENA PROTOCOL ON BIOSAFETY. This meeting, which is organised by the Secretariat to the Convention on Biological Diversity, will serve to lay out the procedures and mechanisms of compliance under the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety. For further information contact the CBD Secretariat, tel: (+1 514) 288 2220; fax: 524 288 6588; email: secretariat@biodiv.org; Internet: <http://www.biodiv.org/meetings/default.aspx>.

16-18 March, Johannesburg, South Africa: GLOBAL CONFERENCE ON INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE AND TRADITIONAL MEDICINE. This conference is organised by the Africa First LLC of Minnesota, USA, in collaboration with South Africa's Ministry of Health, the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), the Association of Australian Indigenous Doctors' Association, the National Maori Health Providers Association of New Zealand and others. The conference will focus on the question of whether assuring protection for indigenous knowledge lead to quality improvements in the global health care system. It will also look at educating Indigenous Healers in ways to develop and protect the intellectual property rights of their medicinal products, processes and procedures for the benefit of themselves and their communities, as well as educating conventional medical practitioners and corporate institutions on the topic. For further information contact William Danquah, tel: (+1 651) 646 4721; fax: 644 3235; email: info@africa-first.com; Internet: <http://www.africa-first.com/iktm2005/index.htm>.

Other Upcoming Events

17-18 March, Vilnius, Lithuania: ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE (ECE) HIGH-LEVEL MEETING OF ENVIRONMENT AND EDUCATION MINISTRIES ON EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT. This ECE regional initiative seeks to contribute to the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2005-2015). The meeting, which will launch the Decade in the UNECE region, is expected to adopt the Strategy for ESD and decide on the framework for its implementation. For further information contact Ella

Behlyarova, tel: (+41 22) 917 23 76; fax: 917 0107; email: Ella.Behlyarova@unece.org; Internet: <http://www.unece.org/env/esd/HI.meetMarch12005.htm>.

17-20 March, Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt: NINTH INTERNATIONAL WATER TECHNOLOGY CONFERENCE. The objective of the conference is to bring together experts, researchers, and decision makers to discuss a range of water-related issues, from water resources management to water treatment, sewage treatment and water desalination. The themes of the conference are low cost technology for water treatment; preserving the environment through water management policies; and using adequate water treatment technologies to reduce water pollution. For further information contact Magdy Abou Rayan, tel: (+20) 3 592 06 41; fax: 5 224 79 00; email: mrayan@globalnet.com.eg; Internet: <http://www.iwtc.tk/>.

24-29 March, Seoul, Republic of Korea: FIFTH MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE ON ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT IN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC. This Ministerial Conference is organised by UNESCAP, UNEP, the World Bank, and Asia Development Bank. The theme of the conference is "achieving environmentally sustainable economic growth". This conference represents an important opportunity for national leaders to create an enabling environment for sustainable development across the region. For further information contact: the Ministry of Environment; tel: (+82 2) 2110 6565; fax: 503 8773; e-mail: hyejungy@me.go.kr; Internet: <http://www.unescap.org/mced/>.

7-8 April, New York, US: NEW CURRENTS IN CONSERVING FRESHWATER SYSTEMS: A BIODIVERSITY SCIENCE SYMPOSIUM. This symposium, hosted by the American Museum of Natural History, will highlight recent successful initiatives in freshwater conservation; discuss cutting-edge ideas and tools; and investigate how and where these innovations might be implemented on the ground. For further information contact Fiona Brady, tel: (+1 212) 496 3431; fax: 769 5292; email: brady@amnh.org; Internet: <http://cbc.amnh.org/symposia/freshwater/>.

27 May, Leuven, Belgium: GENE PATENTS AND PUBLIC HEALTH. Organised by the Centre for Intellectual Property Rights at the Catholic University of Leuven. The conference offers a survey of the varied and complex issues which occur in patenting diagnostic methods. The conference also provides empirical evidence on well-established strategies for using patents and explores new measures for gaining access to patents. For further information contact Ms. Linda Mees, tel: (+32 16) 32 3732; fax: 32 3730; email: Linda.mees@law.kuleuven.ac.be; Internet: <http://www.law.kuleuven.ac.be/cir>

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 hbaumuller@ictsd.ch.

MATRIX ON TRADE MEASURES PURSUANT TO SELECTED MULTILATERAL ENVIRONMENTAL AGREEMENTS. WTO (February 2005). The Secretariat of the World Trade Organization has prepared a note containing a matrix on trade-related measures relating to selected multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs). Prepared in consultation with various MEA secretariats, the note covers 14 agreements, including the Convention on Biological Diversity, UN Framework Convention on Climate Change and its Kyoto Protocol, as well as several chemicals-related treaties. To access this note visit http://www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/envir_e/mea_data_base_e.htm

DEVELOPING EFFECTIVE APPROACHES TO ACCESS TO GENETIC RESOURCES. By Alan Oxley (Australian APEC Study Centre, February 2005). While the use of national biological resources by foreign prospectors has in the past advanced knowledge and innovation, it did little to directly advance protection of biodiversity in the originating countries, the author notes. This paper argues that market-based contractual arrangements to ensure access and benefit-sharing of biological resources offer the best hope for maintaining biodiversity and allowing for its sustainable use, while an approach of regulating patents risks destroying benefits for everyone. To access this report visit <http://www.apec.org.au/docs/oxley2005.pdf>

OUTGROWING THE EARTH: THE FOOD SECURITY CHALLENGE IN AN AGE OF FALLING WATER TABLES AND RISING TEMPERATURES. By Lester R. Brown (March 2005). The author argues that food security depends not only on efforts within agriculture but also on energy policies that stabilise climate, a worldwide effort to raise water productivity, the evolution of land-efficient transport systems, and population policies that seek a humane balance between population and food. For more information and to purchase this book visit

<http://shop.earthscan.co.uk/ProductDetails/mcs/productID/324/groupID/7/categoryID/16>

HARMONY OR HAVOC: CAN THE WTO, BIOSAFETY PROTOCOL AND CODEX ALIMENTARIUS WORK TOGETHER? By Phil Bereano and Elliott Peacock (January 2005). The international movement of genetically engineered organisms falls under an increasing number of apparently independent legal regimes, each with somewhat different primary goals. This policy brief explores the evolving treaty rules -- in light of promoting trade, protecting the environment, safeguarding human health, and recognising consumer interests -- and the still-open issues identified. To access this policy brief visit <http://www.scidev.net/dossiers/index.cfm?fuseaction=policybrief&dossier=6&policy=54>

EVALUATING THE ACCEPTABILITY OF GM CROPS: THE SCOPE FOR AUTONOMY IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES. By Erik Millstone (University of Sussex, January 2005). The authors argue that despite assumptions about WTO rules, Members -- including developing countries -- have a significant degree of autonomy in choosing which GMOs to accept, and which to reject. To access this policy brief visit <http://www.scidev.net/dossiers/index.cfm?fuseaction=policybrief&dossier=6&policy=55>

"Feeding the famine? American food aid and the GMO debate in Southern Africa," by Noah Zerbe in *FOOD POLICY* 29 (2004). The inclusion of genetically modified maize in food aid shipments to Southern Africa during the 2002 food crisis rekindled debates over agricultural biotechnology. By situating the decision to send GM maize to Southern Africa in the context of US-European debates over agricultural biotechnology it becomes clear that the promotion of biotechnology has nothing to do with ending hunger in the region, the author notes. This paper argues that US food aid policy following the 2002 crisis was intended to promote the adoption of biotech crops in Southern Africa, expanding the market access and control of transnational corporations and undermining local smallholder production thereby fostering greater food insecurity.

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