



Bridges Trade BioRes

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

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Chemicals

Basel Parties Debate E-Waste, Patchwork of International Chemicals Rules 1

Biotechnology

Codex to Launch New Work on Safety Assessment Of GM Traces in Food 3

Fisheries

WTO Fish Subsidies Talks Focus on Role of FAO 5

WIPO

WIPO's IGC Agrees New Parallel Track Procedure to Address TK, Folklore 6

In Brief

Europe Adopts Comprehensive Chemicals Legislation 8

Burkina Faso to Introduce GM Cotton 8

Experts Call for Research into Potential Dangers of Nanotechnology 9

EVENTS & RESOURCES

Events 10

Resources 11

Vacancy Announcement 13

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Chemicals

BASEL PARTIES DEBATE E-WASTE, PATCHWORK OF INTERNATIONAL CHEMICALS RULES

Parties to the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal recently debated the difference between reusable electronic products and obsolete electronic waste with hazardous components that poses a serious problem when dumped in developing countries.

The Basel Convention's eighth Conference of the Parties (COP-8) was held in Nairobi, Kenya, from 27 November to 1 December. In addition to e-waste, participants also addressed the current patchwork of international conventions dealing with chemicals and wastes, and continued a long-standing push to ban the shipment of hazardous wastes to developing countries. The so called Ban Amendment that would prohibit all exports of hazardous waste from OECD countries to developing countries was negotiated under the Basel Convention over ten years ago, but has yet to enter into force. The issue was given urgency by the fact that the meeting took place soon after the August toxic waste tragedy in Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire, where poisonous slops were dumped from a ship, leaving thousands of people ill and at least ten dead (see BRIDGES Trade BioRes, 8 September 2006, <http://www.ictsd.org/biores/06-09-08/story2.htm>).

Used e-products - opportunity or threat?

Up to 50 million tonnes of "e-waste" is thought to be generated worldwide each year, as consumers replace mobile phones, televisions and computers. Substantial amounts of such waste are shipped to developing countries where their safe disposal is a growing problem. A number of mobile phone producers were present at the meeting to help find

sustainable solutions to the issue. "Whatever is agreed... developing countries should no longer be victims of hazardous waste transfers disguised as end-of-life or even as usable equipment," commented Sachiko Kuwabara Yamamoto, head of the Basel Convention.

The World Forum on E-waste, which constituted the high-level segment of COP-8, adopted a Declaration on E-waste, which, among other, calls for clean technology and green design, "including the phase-out of hazardous substances used in production". The declaration also stresses that illegal traffic in e-waste is a serious concern that needs to be urgently addressed.

Currently, the mobile phone sector is undertaking pilot work in this area. The "Mobile Phone Partnership Initiative" has produced a voluntary guidance document on environmentally-sound management of used and end-of-life mobile phones, which COP-8 decided should be tested out by more countries.

Private sector representatives and civil society also participated in the high-level segment. Jim Puckett of the Basel Action Network, noted that "Finally, the Convention fully recognised what NGOs had been saying for a long time about the seriousness of the e-waste crisis and vowed to take actions for green design of electronics and for closing off global e-waste trafficking." Others were less positive, however, with the US saying that more confidence should be given to global markets, and that the Declaration's call for reduction rather than phase-out of toxic substances was unrealistic.

Effects of the Abidjan tragedy?

The Abidjan tragedy provided an alarming backdrop to COP-8, prompting civil society organisations to call for the Ban Amendment to finally come into force (see Bridges Trade BioRes,⁵ November 2004, <http://www.ictsd.org/biores/04-11-05/inbrief.htm#1>). According to the Basel Action network, "It became very clear at this meeting that the tragedy in the Ivory Coast reawakened the world to the need for the Basel Ban prohibiting exports of hazardous wastes from developed to developing countries." A recent report on the accident in Abidjan, carried out by a national

inquiry commission led by Fatou Diakite, stated that "Problems linked to lack of rigorous management, failure to observe professional ethics and non-application of regulations ... favoured the entry and dumping of toxic waste in the District of Abidjan." The full inquiry is still ongoing.

The Basel Convention requires exporters of hazardous waste to obtain a certificate of prior informed consent from the competent authorities in the importing country before shipments can proceed. The so-called Ban Amendment — which was negotiated at COP-3 in 1995 — goes further, prohibiting the movement of any hazardous wastes from the EU and other industrialised countries to all other parties. The amendment has been championed by African countries, as well as civil society organisations, due to their concerns over weak monitoring, enforcement and/or disposal capabilities.

However, the ban has yet to enter into force, having been ratified by 63 of the required 127 Parties. Countries disagreed at COP-8 on some of the formal requirements for it to enter into force. Some countries, such as the US and Japan, would like to continue their exports, and claim that the ban would conflict with WTO rules and may pre-empt countries' ability to join in bilateral and multilateral waste trade agreements. Likewise, some receiving countries value the jobs created in the waste processing industry. Other countries, including the EU and a large number of developing countries, are already applying the Ban Amendment.

Patch-work of international agreements requires cooperation

According to Achim Steiner, UNEP Executive Director, "We must assist Côte D'Ivoire now, but it cannot end there. We must enforce existing laws in both OECD and developing countries alongside building the capacity for customs authorities and local waste management at ports and elsewhere to minimise the chances of such an incident occurring in the future."

In addition to highlighting problems related to enforcement, the Abidjan dumping case also focused attention on the patchwork of legal

obligations in the areas of chemicals and wastes — and their gaps. Indeed, the meeting focused on improving cooperation with other treaty processes related to chemicals and shipping.

Kuwabara-Yamamoto stressed that "We need to work closely with the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) to ensure that our respective regimes compliment one another and produce an airtight global system for regulating all wastes linked to shipping. This is equally true in the area of obsolete ships, where we must continue to work in partnership with the IMO as well as with the International Labour Organisation."

COP-8 established an ad hoc joint working group on coordination with the chemicals-related conventions. Participants also called for better cooperation with the IMO's International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL) Convention on the treatment of wastes resulting from the normal operations of ships and the Basel Convention with regard to the transport of waste cargoes. It still remains unclear whether the Abidjan accident would fall under MARPOL or the Basel Convention, although COP-8 addressed the issue head-on.

The meeting also heard an update from the Joint Working Group of the ILO, IMO and Basel Convention on Ship Scrapping. The IMO is currently drafting a new convention on ship recycling, another contentious issue potentially addressed by all three conventions (see Bridges Trade BioRes, 20 October 2006, <http://www.ictsd.org/biores/06-10-20/inbrief.htm#2>).

The next COP of the Basel Convention will be held in September or October 2008 in Indonesia. Additional resources

COP-8 documents are available at <http://cop8.basel.int/>.

For a full report of the meeting see IISD's Earth Negotiations Bulletin at <http://www.iisd.ca/basel/cop8/>.

ICTSD reporting; "UN Meeting Fixes Toxic Waste Steps, Needs Funds," REUTERS, 4 December 2006; "Call for Global Action on E-

waste," UNEP RELEASE, 1 December 2006; "From PC's To Ships: UN Meeting Tackles Toxic Waste," REUTERS, 28 November 2006; "World Governments Asked To Pay For Ivory Coast Cleanup," ENS, 24 November 2006; "Ivorian Toxic Waste Probe Slams Errors by Officials," REUTERS, 24 November 2006; "Tackling Mountains of E-Waste: 50 Million Tons Per Year," ENS, 4 December 2006; "Basel Action Network Report and Press Statements on the Results of the Eighth Conference of the Parties of the Basel Convention," BAN RELEASE, 2 December 2006.

Biotechnology

CODEX TO LAUNCH NEW WORK ON SAFETY ASSESSMENT OF GM TRACES IN FOOD

The Codex Ad Hoc Intergovernmental Task Force on Foods Derived from Biotechnology, at its meeting in Chiba, Japan, from 27 November to 1 December, agreed to a US proposal to undertake new work on developing guidance on safety assessment in situations of accidental presence of genetically modified organisms (GMOs). Meanwhile, given a lack of consensus in the group, delegates decided that discussions on the use of antibiotic resistance marker genes would continue at the next session. Members also decided to establish an electronic working group to elaborate a proposed draft annex on the safety assessment of foods derived from GM plants modified for nutritional or health benefits. New work on safety assessment of trace levels of GM material

Responding to an initiative by the US, the Task Force agreed to elaborate guidance on food safety assessment of foods derived from GM plants in cases where those plants have already been authorised in one or more countries for commercialisation for food use, but are unintentionally present in low levels in food in countries in which the GM plants are not authorised. The US has already adopted national policies on this so called adventitious presence.

The Task Force has formed a working group, which will be chaired by the US, Germany and

Thailand, to draft an annex to the "Guideline for the Conduct of Food Safety Assessment of Foods Derived from Recombinant-DNA Plants", which was adopted in 2003 (see Bridges Trade BioRes, 11 July 2003, <http://www.ictsd.org/biores/03-07-11/inbrief.htm>). The annex will address the elements of a safety assessment for low-level presence of GMOs in food by identifying the relevant sections of the existing guideline. In addition, the annex will identify information-sharing mechanisms to facilitate utilisation of the annex and the data necessary to conduct an assessment of food safety by an importing country. The annex will not replace a full food safety assessment under the guideline for any GM plant foods that would be marketed in a country.

In terms of the scope of the work, the US has targeted GM plants under development, being field tested or plants that are no longer used commercially but may still be present in the food supply. The EU would like to limit the work of the Codex to cases where a GM plant has been approved in one country but not another.

The CEO of the Biotechnology Industry Organisation, Jim Greenwood, commented that "adventitious presence is a safe and natural part of plant biology, seed production, and the distribution of commodity crops". Consumers International (CI), on the other hand, has argued that the issue is a legal one rather than a food safety issue, and adventitious presence of unauthorised GM material should never be accepted. Divergences on the use of antibiotic resistance marker genes

Regarding the draft guidelines for the conduct of food safety assessments of foods derived from GM animals, Codex members did not take any decision on the use of antibiotic resistance marker genes (ABRMG). They decided to continue the discussion at the next session, paying attention to the result of the FAO/WHO joint expert consultation on "marker and reporter gene" and "non-heritable applications", which will be held in early 2007. This expert consultation will provide scientific advice on the issue to help Codex members take a decision (see Bridges Trade BioRes, 2 June 2006, <http://www.ictsd.org/biores/06-06-02/story1.htm>). ABRMGs are inserted in the

modified organism to identify genetically transformed plants; i.e. only plants with the marker gene will grow on material that contains antibiotics. Some fear that these genes may be transferred into bacteria in the stomach, thereby making potentially harmful bacteria resistant to antibiotics.

Development on second generation biotech

Following the discussions held at the last meetings (see Bridges Trade BioRes, 25 September 2005, <http://www.ictsd.org/biores/05-09-30/inbrief.htm#3>), Codex members agreed to establish an electronic working group to elaborate a proposed draft annex on food safety assessment of foods derived from GM plants modified for nutritional or health benefits to the guideline. The proposed draft annex prepared by the working group will be circulated for comments prior to the next session. The proposed annex suggests that the factors which determine whether a GM plant is a GM plant modified for nutritional or health benefit are: a) the GM plant "exhibits a particular trait in a portion of the plant intended for food use"; and b) "the trait aims to alter either the quantity or bioavailability of a nutrient or related substance, an anti-nutrient, a toxin or an allergen, or their interactions with other components of the plant, to achieve an intended nutritional or health benefit". The annex will not cover plants that have been genetically modified to create pharmaceuticals, as decided at the last meeting.

Background

While Codex standards are only voluntary, the Codex Alimentarius Commission is recognised by the SPS Agreement as the international organisation responsible for standard-setting related to food safety. WTO Members "shall base" their measures related to human and plant health on Codex's standards, guidelines or recommendations. Such measures "shall be deemed to be necessary to protect human, animal or plant life or health, and presumed to be consistent with the relevant provisions" of the SPS Agreement. The other two international standard-setting body recognised in the SPS Agreement are the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) for plant health and the

Office International de Epizooties (OIE) for animal health.

Additional resources

Meeting documents are available at http://www.codexalimentarius.net/download/report/675/bt06_01e.pdf.

ICTSD reporting; "BIO Welcomes Codex Alimentarius Project to Develop Adventitious Presence Policy", 1 December 2006, BIOTECHNOLOGY INDUSTRY ORGANIZATION.

Fisheries

WTO FISH SUBSIDIES TALKS FOCUS ON ROLE OF FAO

After several months of suspension following the collapse of the trade talks in July, countries on 12 December restarted discussions on how to discipline fisheries subsidies in the WTO, albeit in informal mode. The largely technical debate focused on the possible role of external input, notably from the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), in developing and implementing the rules.

In this context, Members picked up several issues that had been raised in different proposals, in particular those related to special & differential treatment (S&DT) where countries have suggested drawing on FAO data and guidelines to ensure that subsidised fishing under S&DT remains within sustainable limits.

Fisheries management and the FAO Code of Conduct

Some Members have suggested allowing developing countries to provide certain subsidies, including those that enhance the capacity of fishing fleets, on the condition that a fisheries management scheme has been put in place, raising the question how ensure not just the existence but also the effectiveness of such schemes.

Brazil, for instance, in earlier proposals had suggested using membership in regional fisheries

management organisations (RFMOs) as a condition, but had subsequently dropped the idea in response to widespread scepticism regarding the coverage and capacities of RFMOs (see Bridges Trade BioRes, 3 April 2006, <http://www.ictsd.org/biores/06-04-03/inbrief.htm#1>).

In its June proposal, Argentina had suggested that countries wishing to provide subsidies under S&DT should be required to implement national management systems "in keeping with" the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries (see Bridges Trade BioRes, 30 June 2006, <http://www.ictsd.org/biores/06-06-30/story1.htm>).

At the recent meeting, some Members raised concerns that such a direct cross-reference to the Code could effectively turn a voluntary instrument into a mandatory requirement. Moreover, should a dispute arise, it could be left to the WTO to determine whether the Code had been complied with, which Members agree would clearly exceed the competence and mandate of the trade body.

Argentina clarified that the Code should simply be seen as a standard — similar to those already referred to in the agreements on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (SPS) and on Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) — which Members were free, but not obliged to follow.

Others pointed out that only some of the Code's provisions actually dealt with management-related issues. Thus, rather than referring to the Code, they suggested identifying the relevant elements and integrating them directly into the WTO disciplines.

Assessing stock levels

Another key issue in the discussion related to the availability and reliability of data to assess stock levels which would be necessary to show that levels were sufficiently high to allow developing countries to expand their capacity under the S&DT provisions.

Brazil, for instance, had proposed allowing the provision of capacity-enhancing subsidies only for those fisheries that are not 'patently at risk', i.e.

that are not judged 'overexploited', 'depleted' or 'recovering' by the FAO. Argentina had suggested that such subsidies should only be permitted for the fishing of "surplus species", defined as species where the catch capacities of the fishing fleet were below the maximum allowable catch (based on national data).

Some Members raised concerns over the feasibility of assessing stock levels with sufficient accuracy. The EU in particular noted that international data was too unreliable to make such judgements. Moreover, since the FAO draws extensively on data supplied by individual countries, some Members feared that strong reliance on the FAO could result in a negative feedback effect by providing a disincentive for Members to submit their data. Relying entirely on national data, on the other, would effectively mean that Members would police themselves.

As a compromise, the possibility of using both international and national data was raised. For instance, capacity-enhancing subsidies would not be allowed for any fishery judged depleted and overexploited by the FAO. For the remaining fisheries — which would only amount to a few given that three quarters of global fish stocks are already at risk — countries would calculate their surplus themselves, which in the case of a dispute could be cross-checked with international data.

Regarding Argentina's proposal to determine surplus "in accordance with" Articles 61 and 26 of the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), Members raised general questions about possible implications of referring to other treaties which could put the onus on a dispute panel to examine compliance with these treaties.

De minimis proposal again under attack

While most of the discussion at the meeting was of a technical nature, the majority of Members came out strongly against the 'de minimis' proposal put forward by Japan, Korea and Taiwan. These countries had suggested applying S&DT only to those developing countries that account for less than a minimum percentage of the world market share of fish, or which have catches that fall below a certain weight threshold. Most Members felt that such an approach was too

static and did not adequately respond to the environmental and developmental objectives of the negotiations.

No additional informal or regular meetings of the Rules Group have so far been scheduled.

Additional resources

To access WTO submissions on fisheries subsidies, visit <http://www.trade-environment.org/page/theme/tewto/para28.htm>.

ICTSD reporting.

WIPO

WIPO'S IGC AGREES NEW PARALLEL TRACK PROCEDURE TO ADDRESS TK, FOLKLORE

Recent discussions on traditional knowledge (TK) and folklore at the World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO) led to a new approach to work in this area. As members did not converge around a single track, they agreed on a two-track approach focusing on both draft provisions that potentially could be used to create a legally-binding instrument and a more general discussion on a list of key issues.

The tenth session of WIPO's Intergovernmental Committee (IGC-10) on Intellectual Property and Genetic Resources, Traditional Knowledge and Folklore took place from 30 November to 8 December in Geneva. The discussions took place based on two sets of draft provisions for the protection of traditional knowledge (WIPO/GRTKF/IC/10/5) and the protection of traditional cultural expressions (WIPO/GRTKF/IC/10/4). The WIPO secretariat had prepared these following a request by Venezuela, supported by a number of developing country members, based on previous discussions at IGC sessions and on several formal submissions by the Latin American, African and Asian Groups asking for the identification of elements for a sui generis system to protect TK. The IGC also considered a document outlining practical options to give an international

dimension to this protection (WIPO/GRTKF/IC/10/6).

Draft legal text...

The two sets of draft provisions include objectives and some guiding and substantive principles for a potential future system for the protection of TK and folklore. They specify, among other, definitions, subject matter, titleholders, rights over TK and folklore, the content and duration of those rights, and administration and enforcement issues.

They were well received and had already benefited from comments by developing countries and some developed countries, such as Norway, in previous sessions of the IGC. A number of African countries had even called for a legally binding instrument to protect TK and folklore at the last WIPO General Assemblies in September 2006. Some other members such as the US, Japan, Canada and Switzerland — which oppose the creation of a new legal instrument on TK and folklore — have, however, expressed concerns over where the whole process is going and called for further discussion.

...vs a list of key issues

Prior to IGC-10 its Chair, Ambassador Gusti Puja of Indonesia, undertook a series of informal consultations on how to move the process forward. Based on these discussions, he prepared a list of issues linked to traditional knowledge and traditional cultural expressions for consideration at the IGC plenary. While the issues included in the list are similar to those already covered by the draft set of objectives and principles, various developing country members considered it would divert the focus of the IGC from the legal text to issues of more general nature and potentially dilute any outcome.

IGC-10 agrees on a two-track approach

During IGC-10, the Chair called informal consultations through regional groups on the way forward. These consultations led to a procedural solution under which discussions will commence on a number of key issues — such as definitions of TK and traditional cultural expressions, the

form and scope of protection, and the nature of the beneficiaries — outlined in an annex to the compilation of decisions taken at the IGC session (they will also be posted on the WIPO website). Delegates and observers are invited to submit comments on the list before the end of March 2007, and the issues will be discussed at the next session of the IGC.

Meanwhile, the existing documents containing the draft provisions for the protection of TK and folklore, as well as the international dimension of this protection, remain on the table as well. The secretariat will collate comments made by delegations and observers on the draft provisions, and link them with comments on the related issues in the list of issues.

As such, there will be a merger of comments on both the draft set of provisions and the list of issues in a comparative document. Due to the fact that the list of issues is part of this new framework, members will have the opportunity before the end of March 2007 to make comments they consider appropriate on the draft provisions as well.

On the substantive front, the main controversial provisions and issues discussed during the tenth IGC session included 1) definitions, 2) scope, 3) role of databases, 4) issues related to shared knowledge among countries or regions, 5) links with the current intellectual property (IP) system and 6) the legal nature of the final outcome. According to a trade source, the provisions and issues will ultimately define what is to be protected and the legal effects of such protection. While developing countries have sought to provide precise comments on these provisions and issues, some developed countries, such as Japan and the US, would like to avoid creating new form of protection for TK holders or to generate any change to the current IP system.

Background

The IGC was established by the WIPO General Assembly in October 2000. Its original mandate was to discuss IP issues relevant to access to genetic resources and benefit-sharing, TK, and innovations, as well as traditional creativity and cultural expressions (expressions of folklore). This

mandate was renewed in 2003, with a view to accelerating the work and focusing on the international dimension, without prejudice to other international processes. The process is open to all member states of WIPO. Other UN member states, intergovernmental organisations and accredited non-governmental organisations participate as observers. More than 180 NGOs have been accredited, including 93 NGOs especially accredited by the IGC, many of which represent the specific interests of indigenous communities and TK holders. In 2006, a voluntary fund for the participation of indigenous peoples was created to ensure the participation and engagement in the IGC discussions.

The next session of the IGC will be held in July 2007.

ICTSD reporting; "WIPO Committee Breaks Deadlock in Talks on Traditional Knowledge, Folklore," IP WATCH, 6 December 2006; "IGC Addresses Core Issues for the Protection of Traditional Knowledge and Traditional Cultural Expressions," WIPO PRESS RELEASE, 12 December 2006.

In Brief

EUROPE ADOPTS COMPREHENSIVE CHEMICALS LEGISLATION

Following three years of negotiations, the European Parliament adopted a comprehensive law on the manufacturing, marketing, import and use of chemical substances on 13 December. Entitled REACH — Registration, Evaluation, Authorisation and Restriction of Chemicals — the legislation aims to protect consumers and the environment against the adverse effects of chemicals found in products like paint, detergents, cars and computers.

According to European Environment Commissioner Stavros Dimas, REACH will "increase our knowledge about chemicals, enhance safety, and spur innovation, while encouraging substitution of highly dangerous chemicals by safer ones". The law has been described as one of the most complex and far-reaching EU regulations ever.

Under REACH, 30,000 chemicals produced or imported into the EU will be registered with a central agency in Helsinki over a period of 11 years. The most hazardous chemicals will be subject to testing, and will require authorisation to be used. Persistent, bio-accumulative and toxic chemicals are set to be phased out if suitable alternatives exist; if not, companies will have to submit a plan for developing such alternatives. However, they will not be banned outright, something environmental groups have criticised.

REACH places the burden of proof on the chemicals industry, with the public sector responsible for oversight. Thousands of chemicals that have been in use for years without testing will now undergo screening. Industry groups have criticised the new law for being overly cumbersome and expensive.

Trading partners such as the US, as well as developing countries, have also criticised REACH, claiming it will restrict trade (see Bridges Trade BioRes, 16 June 2006, <http://www.ictsd.org/biores/06-06-16/story4.htm>). The EU, however, has said that the legislation will set a new global standard, hoping other nations would follow suit.

The EU Environment Council, meeting on 18 December, is expected to formally adopt the package of legislation, allowing REACH to enter into force on 1 June 2007.

"EU to Usher in New Chemicals Era with Landmark Law," REUTERS, 12 December 2006; "Landmark EU chemical law passed," BBC, 13 December 2006; "Europe Parliament to Regulate Chemicals," GUARDIAN, 13 December 2006; "REACH: Commission welcomes European Parliament vote on new EU chemicals legislation," EU PRESS RELEASE, 13 December 2006.

BURKINA FASO TO INTRODUCE GM COTTON

Burkina Faso, a leading cotton producer in West Africa, recently announced that its farmers will be allowed to plant genetically modified (GM) cotton in the 2007 growing season. The country initiated field trials in 2003 with the support of the US Agency for International Development (USAID).

According to Agriculture Minister Salif Diallo “this new technology will reduce the cost of production for farmers and eliminate the predators of the cotton sector”. This move makes Burkina Faso the first major cotton grower in the region to turn to GM technology in a bid to weather falling prices on the global market.

Farmers and civil society groups, however, said that GM cotton provided no solution, and questioned claims that output would grow by 30 percent. According to the Coalition for the Protection of African Genetic Heritage (COPAGEN), “GMOs are not a solution for Africa. The major problems that agriculture faces in our countries include incompetent water management, low soil fertility in many regions, lack of access to the means of production, in particular around issues related to land, lack of access to loans at acceptable interest rates, and the processing of our raw materials on our own continent.” In addition, COPAGEN said that the introduction of GM cotton might open the door to “all genetically modified seeds in agriculture and food,” which a number of African countries have opposed.

A year ago, local groups raised similar concerns when Mail, supported by USAID, Monsanto and Syngenta, launched field trials of Bt cotton. The farmers groups in Mali stressed that their problem was low cotton prices, not low productivity. The Coalition to Protect Mali's Genetic Heritage further cautioned that paying for GM seeds would be problematic for poor, small-scale farmers, who lack financial resources and are the stewards of a number of unique local seed varieties.

Burkina Faso was one of the four West African sponsors of the cotton initiative at the WTO ahead of the Cancun ministerial in 2003 (see Bridges Trade BioRes, 2 June 2003, <http://www.ictsd.org/biores/03-06-02/story1.htm>), which led to the creation of a sub-committee on cotton under the WTO Committee on Agriculture. The purpose of the cotton initiative was to address structural imbalances in the global market, namely the fact that the massive cotton subsidies provided by developed countries had led to artificially low international prices.

Four million people in Burkina Faso depend on cotton for a living, and cotton sales yield 60 percent of the country's state revenue.

“Impoverished Burkina Faso turns to GMO cotton to boost output, quality,” AFP, 3 December 2006; “Burkina Faso's GM cotton causes concern,” BUSINESS IN AFRICA, 27 November 2006; “Mali's David v Goliath GM struggle,” BBC, 7 December 2005.

EXPERTS CALL FOR RESEARCH INTO POTENTIAL DANGERS OF NANOTECHNOLOGY

A team of experts have called for a programme of systematic risk research into the potential dangers of nanotechnology in consumer products. The team stated that while fears over nanotechnology's risks may be exaggerated, they are not necessarily unfounded, and they merit further research.

Nanotechnology is the science of manipulating materials on a tiny molecular scale. Nanoparticles are one-billionth of a meter in size, which is bigger than an atom but smaller than a red blood cell.

Recently published studies have indicated that nanoparticles' size, surface area, surface chemistry and ability to dissolve in water are all characteristics that may cause environmental or biological harm. Preliminary animal studies have indicated that nanoparticles can cause inflammation, damage brain-cells and trigger pre-cancerous lesions.

Andrew Maynard, the Woodrow Wilson Center's chief science advisor for the Project on Emerging Nanotechnologies, warned in the paper, published in the 15 November edition of Nature journal, that “the threat of possible harm - whether real or imagined - is threatening to slow the development of nanotechnology unless sound, independent and authoritative information is developed on what the risks are and how to avoid them”. He and his colleagues posed five “grand challenges” to the research community at large, which include developing instruments to measure exposure to nanomaterials in the air and water, and to measure their short- and long-term toxicity. Maynard and his colleagues are particularly concerned about the

eventual accumulation of engineered nanomaterials in water systems.

Over the past year the number of consumer products made with nanotechnology has skyrocketed to 47, with a 70 percent increase in the last eight months alone. Nanomaterials are now used in everything from high-quality cosmetics to stain-resistant clothing, anti-germ food containers, and anti-bacterial washing machines.

The most often utilised nanomaterial today is nanosilver, which is usually marketed for its anti-bacterial effects.

“Boom in Nanotechnology Poses Consumer Risks, NRDC Warns,” NATURAL RESOURCES DEFENSE COUNCIL, 27 November 2006; “Five-Step Check for Nano Safety,” BBC NEWS, 16 November 2006; “Safety of Nanotechnology Needs More Attention,” ENVIRONMENT NEWS SERVICE, 28 November 2006.

EVENTS & RESOURCES

EVENTS

For a more comprehensive list of events in trade and sustainable development, please refer to ICTSD's web calendar. 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.

14-16 December, Bangalore, India: 3RD FUTURE ENVIRONMENTAL TRENDS CONFERENCE: ENERGY, ENVIRONMENT, AND DEVELOPMENT - ANALYSING OPPORTUNITIES FOR REDUCING POVERTY. This meeting is organised by the Institut Veolia Environnement (IVE), The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI), and the Institute for Sustainable Development and International Relationships (IDDRI). It will focus on challenges for sustainable development that arise from the nexus between energy, environment, and poverty. For further information, contact: Ulka Kelkar, TERI India; e-mail: eed@teri.res.in; Internet: http://www.teriin.org/events_inside.php_id_17298.

17-19 December, Algiers, Algeria: DESERTIFICATION AND THE INTERNATIONAL POLICY IMPERATIVE. This conference will interlink with and build upon other meetings and conferences held in 2006 to celebrate the International Year of Deserts and Desertification. It is hosted by the Algerian Government and organised by the UN University (UNU). For further information, contact Caroline King, UNU, Ontario, Canada; tel: (1-905) 525-9140, Ex. 24517; fax: (1-905) 529-4261; e-mail: conference@inweh.unu.edu; Internet: <http://www.inweh.unu.edu/inweh/drylands/IYD D.htm>.

18-19 December, Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh: NATIONAL SEMINAR ON GLOBALISATION AND INDIA: VOICES FROM THE GROUND. Organised jointly by the Consumer Unity and Trust Society's Centre for International Trade, Economics & Environment (CUTS-CITEE) and the Network of Entrepreneurship & Economic Development (NEED). The objective of this seminar is to provide a forum for civil society representatives to share their experiences in generating awareness on the linkages between trade and development throughout India; and to deliberate over the best policy methods to ensure that the poor benefit from globalisation. Internet: <http://www.cuts-citee.org/events.htm>.

19 December, Brussels, Belgium: EU TRADE SUSTAINABILITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT (SIA) MEETING. This meeting, organised by the European Commission, is set to discuss the midterm reports of the Trade SIA of the Association Agreement under negotiation between the European Community and Mercosur. To register, send an email to trade-SIA@ec.europa.eu.

26-27 January, Budapest, Hungary: FARMSUBSIDY.ORG CONFERENCE. Farmsubsidy.org is planning to hold a two-day conference on "Transparency in European Union Farm Subsidies" in Budapest, Hungary in January. The conference will assemble current participants in the Farmsubsidy.org network and people who would like to become involved in promoting greater transparency in European Union agricultural policies. Farmsubsidy.org is a project

coordinated by the Danish International Center for Analytical Reporting (DICAR) and EU Transparency, a non-profit organisation in the UK. Its aim is to obtain detailed data relating to payments and recipients of farm subsidies in every EU member state and make this data available in a way that is useful to European citizens. The project involves journalists, analysts and campaigners in more than ten countries. For further information see http://www.farmsubsidy.org/budapest_conference.

30-31 March, the Hague, the Netherlands: TACKLING CLIMATE CHANGE - AN APPRAISAL OF THE KYOTO PROTOCOL AND OPTIONS FOR THE FUTURE. The Conference, organised at the T.M.C. Asser Institute, will focus on the legal and institutional aspects of the Kyoto Protocol implementation and the post-2012 phase, bringing together the most qualified experts worldwide on the subject. The conference programme, the registration form and all relevant information on the event, are available at: http://www.eel.nl/events/EventShowPublished.asp?event_id=263.

RESOURCES

If you have a relevant resource (books, papers, bulletins, etc.) you would like to see announced in this section, please forward a copy for review by the BRIDGES staff to Malena Sell.

ICTSD Resources

FISHERIES, INTERNATIONAL TRADE AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: POLICY DISCUSSION PAPER. October 2006. This policy discussion paper aims to provide policy-makers, scientists, advocates, journalists and those engaged in the fishing industry with an overview of the key linkages, tensions and policy debates at the intersection of fisheries and international trade. The paper does not advocate a particular perspective or make recommendations; rather it endeavours to highlight different views and options for policy-making. Organised around the three broad public policy objectives, Part One of the paper reviews the key economic, environmental and social factors that influence the

management, harvest, production and trade of fisheries resources, calling attention to emerging trade trends and the precarious state of fisheries resources. Part Two reviews the key trade-related areas of international policy debate relevant to the fisheries sector: tariff liberalisation; safeguards and anti-dumping; standards and other non-tariff barriers; ecolabelling; subsidies; access agreements; and trade-related measures to promote fisheries management and environmental protection. Each of these chapters follows a similar format, identifying the policy issue at hand, the relevant background, the key policy debates and tensions, and the relevant international processes. The paper concludes with a summary of the linkages between trade policy issues and sustainable development priorities, and a set of proposals for further research. To access the paper visit http://www.trade-environment.org/page/ictsd/projects/fish_pp.htm.

Other Resources

CATCHING MORE BAIT: A BOTTOM-UP RE-ESTIMATION OF GLOBAL FISHERIES SUBSIDIES. By Ussif Rashid Sumaila and Daniel Pauly (eds.). Fisheries Centre Research Reports 2006, Vol. 14(6). This report contains five contributions on the issue of fisheries subsidies. The first four contributions have a global scope, while chapter 5 looks at the history of fisheries subsidies in one country, Brazil. The book identifies, categorises, and compiles a database of fisheries subsidies for 144 maritime countries spanning 1995 to 2005. Topics covered include fuel and non-fuel subsidies, subsidies to bottom trawl fleets and development assistance. To access this report, visit http://www.fisheries.ubc.ca/publications/reports/report14_6.php.

THE ECOLOGICAL FISHPRINT OF NATIONS MEASURING HUMANITY'S IMPACT ON MARINE ECOSYSTEMS. By John Talberth, Karen Wolowicz, Jason Venetoulis, Michel Gelobter, Paul Boyle and Bill Mott. Redefining Progress, November 2006. The report adapts the popular Ecological Footprint tool to measure humanity's impact on marine ecosystems. The Fishprint measures the amount of ocean area needed to sustain the consumption patterns of

individual nations and the world as a whole. The report is available at <http://www.rprogress.org/newpubs/2006/FishprinfofNations2006.pdf>.

BREAKING WAVES: A DIGEST OF OCEAN NEWS. A new World Ocean Observatory online news service, Breaking Waves features articles on ocean and water-related issues. These are chronologically compiled from daily searches of more than 150 news and information sources around the globe. Issues covered include conservation, climate change and weather, ocean energy, and commerce and transportation. To access this source, see <http://www.thew2o.net/oceanForum.html>.

LEVERAGING THE MARKET FOR A SUSTAINABLE COFFEE ECONOMY: OPPORTUNITIES FOR RENEGOTIATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL COFFEE AGREEMENT. By Jason Potts, IISD, 2006. International Cooperation has long been recognised as a fundamental instrument for building sustainable commodities markets. While such cooperation has typically been defined by price stabilisation and corresponding supply management strategies, a new generation of supply chain sustainability initiatives has opened the door for catalysing sustainable production and trade along commodity supply chains. The renegotiation of the International Coffee Agreement presents an unprecedented opportunity for leveraging the potential of supply chain approaches through international cooperation. This report by the International Institute for Sustainable Development for the Steering Committee of the Sustainable Coffee Partnership, presents a series of opportunities for leveraging market-based approaches to building a sustainable coffee economy. To access the report, visit http://www.iisd.org/pdf/2006/coffee_global_strategy.pdf.

FUTURE OF RICE. By Emerlito Borromeo and Debal Deb. Greenpeace, November 2006. Rice is the world's most important staple food - grown in over 100 countries, consumed regularly by over two billion people and the primary source of protein for millions. But the production of rice is at a critical crossroad if the future biodiversity of

rice and rice farmers, producers and consumers is going to be protected. The Greenpeace International report 'Future of Rice' highlights problems with current rice production and documents scientifically proven solutions currently used by rice farmers around the world. Sustainable rice production is already being achieved. The report presents an analysis of these sustainable rice production methods, which include traditional rice growing systems and cutting edge technologies. The report's authors also examine genetic engineering which is frequently touted as a quick fix solution to agricultural problems. To access the report visit <http://www.greenpeace.org/international/press/reports/future-of-rice>.

CROP BIOTECHNOLOGY AND THE AFRICAN FARMER. By Carl K. Eicher, Karim Maredia, and Idah Sithole-Niang. Food Policy 31 (2006) pp. 504-527. Recent reports, workshops and meetings on GM (Genetically Modified) crops tend to characterise GM food production as a solution to Africa's food crisis. However, GM crops are currently grown commercially in only one country in Africa - South Africa. This paper focuses on GM crop improvement and analyses the development of seven GM crops (six food staples and cotton) over the past 15 years in Africa. The case studies reveal a number of unexpected scientific, legal, economic and political barriers to the development of GM crops and long delays in developing and implementing national biosafety regulations and guidelines. The authors conclude that most GM crops are at least 10-15 years or longer from reaching smallholder farmers in Africa. During this time special attention should be given to strengthening conventional plant breeding programs in NARS (National Agricultural Research Systems), African universities and the CGIAR. Biotechnology approaches must be nested and integrated into plant breeding programs. Special attention should also be given to raising public awareness of biotechnology, mobilizing political support and commitment to strengthening African capacity in biotechnology, biosafety, food safety and IPR (Intellectual Property Rights) and mounting long-term training programs to train the next generation of African plant breeders and GM crop specialists. To access the article, visit

<http://www.africabiotech.com/pdf/Crop-Biotechnology-and-the-African-Farmer.pdf>.

VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT

PROGRAMME OFFICER, ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES (ENR) PROGRAMME AT ICTSD. The Programme Officer will contribute substantively and programmatically to ICTSD's efforts to promote sustainable development in trade policy-making and trade negotiations in relation to environment and natural resources. Responsibilities will include managerial and substantive contribution to the various projects of the programme, with a primary responsibility for ICTSD's project on Fisheries, Trade and Sustainable Development; writing and editing for the regular and occasional publications of ICTSD; administrative and logistical management of dialogues. For further information see

<http://www.ictsd.org/about/TORProgrammeOfficerENR.pdf>.