



Bridges Trade BioRes

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

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Standards

CODEX TASK FORCE COMPLETES THREE BIOTECH GUIDELINES

A set of new international guidelines related to biotech products have recently been agreed, potentially facilitating trade in cases where trace levels of genetically modified material is found.

The Codex Ad Hoc Intergovernmental Task Force on Foods Derived from Biotechnology, at its meeting in Chiba, Japan, from 24 to 28 September, agreed to forward three guidelines for the conduct of food safety assessments to the next of the Codex Alimentarius Commission for adoption. These guidelines are intended to help countries assess the risk of: imported food containing low levels of non-approved genetically modified (GM) plant material; foods derived from biotech animals; and foods derived from biotech plants modified for nutritional or health benefits.

The European Union - which generally takes a cautious approach to biotech, as opposed to pro-biotech countries such as the US - agreed to the new guidelines on the food safety assessment of foods with a low-level presence of biotech plant material on condition that an effective system for data and information sharing would be set up. The EU currently applies a zero-tolerance policy for non-authorised genetically modified organisms (GMOs) in food and feed imports. The new Codex guideline is set to help reduce trade barriers.

Guidelines on the safety assessment of trace levels of GM plant material

The Codex Biotech Task Force agreed in December 2006 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, and are

unintentionally present in low levels in food in countries in which the GM plants are not authorised due to imports (see Bridges Trade BioRes, 15 December 2006, <http://www.ictsd.org/biores/06-12-15/story2.htm>). A working group, chaired by the US and co-chaired by Germany and Thailand, was established to draft guidance on this issue in the form of an annex to existing guidelines on the safety assessment of biotech foods (see Bridges Trade BioRes, 11 July 2003, <http://www.ictsd.org/biores/03-07-11/inbrief.htm>).

The meeting in late September in Chiba completed the draft annex, and forwarded it for adoption by the next session of the Codex Commission.

The annex describes the recommended approach to food safety assessment in situations of low-level presence of GM plant material in food, or for advance preparation for such circumstances. The annex also describes data and information-sharing mechanisms to facilitate the use of the annex and to determine whether it should apply. However, the annex does not address risk management measures, nor prevent national authorities from conducting a safety assessment according to the Codex Guideline on plant biotechnology. It does not eliminate the responsibility of industries, exporters and national competent authorities to continue to meet countries' relevant import requirements, including in relation to unauthorised GM plant material.

The document can be applied under two different scenarios. The first situation involves trace levels of unauthorised GM material intermixed with commodities such as grains, beans or oil seeds, meaning that the unauthorised material would be diluted. Individual servings of food containing the commodity would contain low levels of material derived from GM plant varieties. In the second situation, the exposure would be to foods consumed whole or diluted - such as fruits and vegetables including potatoes, tomatoes or papaya - meaning exposure would be rare, but could be to an undiluted form of the unauthorised GM plant material; An entire unauthorised fruit or vegetable might be consumed.

At the meeting, the EU stressed that it could agree to forwarding the annex for adoption at the next Codex Alimentarius Commission on the condition that an effective system for data and information sharing was put into place. The annex text now states that countries should make requisite data and information available to a publicly accessible central database. At the request of the EU delegation, the Biosafety Clearing House of the Cartagena Protocol and/or Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) BioTrack Product Database could be used in certain cases to provide important information to regulating authorities. Some countries did not support this reference, including for the reason that not all Codex members are party to the Cartagena Protocol or the OECD, and the Cartagena Protocol addresses living modified organisms only.

The annex also requests that Codex members make available, to the central database, detection method protocols and reference material suitable for situations of low-level presence of GM material.

The 31st Session of the Commission, which is set to adopt the new guidelines, will be held in Geneva, Switzerland, from 30 June to 5 July 2008.

Clare Oxborrow from Friends of the Earth expressed concern over the new guidelines. "We are concerned by attempts to legalise contamination of unapproved GM ingredients through Codex. The GM industry has failed to control contamination of the food chain, as last years GM rice contamination incident highlighted. It is outrageous that instead of tightening up controls to prevent this contamination happening in the first place, the US is attempting to legalise such contamination. Governments must uphold European legislation which has a zero tolerance approach to unauthorised GMOs to ensure that consumers and the environment are protected," she said.

The European Association for Bioindustries, EuropaBio, on the other hand, welcomed the agreement on the new guidelines. "The delays in approval of biotech products in Europe compared to the rest of the world as well the absence of a science-based approach to address low level

presence is already leading to trade disruption and seriously impacting the supply of feedstuffs," said Johan Vanhemelrijck, Secretary General of EuropaBio. "Moreover, this unresolved issue that bears no relationship with safety is having a damaging effect on public confidence towards biotech products. In light of the Codex decisions, we hope that the EU will revisit its zero tolerance policy towards low level presence, speed up its approval process and define the appropriate science-based approach so that European food and feed supplies are secured," he added.

Agreement on antibiotic resistance marker genes

The Codex Biotech Task Force agenda also includes GM animals. As a step towards agreeing on draft guidelines for the conduct of food safety assessments of foods derived from GM animals, the Task Force agreed in 2005 to forward questions formulated by member states about "marker and reporter genes" to FAO and WHO for scientific advice (see Bridges Trade BioRes, 15 December 2005, <http://www.ictsd.org/biores/06-12-15/story2.htm>). Some Codex members, such as the EU, and civil society groups such as Consumers International, have expressed concerns regarding the safety of antibiotic resistance marker genes. Such marker genes 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. Marker genes are rarely used in animal biotechnology.

The Task Force finally agreed to maintain the section on the use of antibiotic resistance marker genes unchanged since the report of the FAO/WHO joint expert consultation, which took place in March, had not brought any new scientific evidence that would justify the need for additional or different provisions. The Task Force agreed to forward the proposed draft guidelines for adoption by the 31st Session of the Commission.

The draft guideline for the conduct of food safety assessments of foods derived from biotech animals directly copies the GM plant guideline.

The text says that alternative technologies to antibiotic resistance marker genes should be used in the future development of animal biotechnology. Also, the factors to assess the safety of foods containing antibiotic resistance marker genes should be the following: a) the clinical and veterinary use and importance of the antibiotic in question; b) whether the presence in food of the enzyme or protein encoded by the antibiotic resistance marker gene would compromise the therapeutic efficacy of orally administered antibiotic; and c) the safety of the gene product. The section finally says that if the presence of the antibiotic resistance marker gene or gene product present risks to human health, the marker gene or gene product should not be present in food.

GM plants modified for nutritional and health benefits

The Biotech Task Force also agreed to forward a proposed draft annex on guidance for the safety assessment of foods derived from GM plants modified for nutritional or health benefits to the 31st Session of the Codex Commission. The proposed annex has been redrafted by a working group led by Canada, and co-chaired by Argentina and New Zealand.

The proposed annex defines the factors determining a GM plant as modified for nutritional or health benefit as the following: a) the GM plant "exhibits a particular trait in a portion of the plant intended for food use"; and b) the trait is a result of the introduction of a new nutrient, or alteration of either the quantity or bioavailability of a nutrient, removal or reduction of undesirable substance such as allergens or toxicants, or alteration of the interaction of nutritional or health relevance of these substances.

The draft annex says that foods derived from GM plants modified for nutritional or health benefits may benefit certain populations/sub-populations, while others may be at risk from the same food. The food safety assessment is intended to identify new or altered hazards relative to the conventional counterpart.

Background

While Codex standards are only voluntary, the Codex Alimentarius Commission is recognised by the WTO 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 of 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 information

The report of the Biotech Task Force meeting is available at <http://www.codexalimentarius.net/web/archives.jsp?lang=en>

ICTSD reporting; "Codex Proposes Guidelines for Non-Approved GMOs," FOODNAVIGATOR, 5 October 2007.

Biodiversity

NO OUTCOME IN SIGHT FOR ACCESS AND BENEFIT-SHARING UNDER THE BIODIVERSITY CONVENTION

Two closely related subsidiary bodies of the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) recently gathered in Montreal to negotiate outstanding elements in support of the implementation of the CBD. The fifth meeting of the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on Access and Benefit Sharing (ABS) met from 8-12 October. It was followed by the fifth meeting of the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on Article 8(j), Traditional Knowledge and Related Provisions, which took place from 15-19 October. Both groups saw a continued divide between countries seeking to make progress on legally-

binding instruments, and those in favour of further discussions and more flexible solutions.

The group dealing with ABS will meet once more before the next CBD Conference of the Parties, scheduled for May next year. Participants in both groups felt that momentum was likely to start picking up at and after the COP only.

ABS outcome still open-ended

Access and benefit sharing (ABS) remains one of the most complex issues on the CBD agenda. Many developing countries are very concerned over "bio piracy," which refers to the misappropriation — generally by means of patents — of indigenous or traditional knowledge by foreign entities without compensatory payment. Countries take different viewpoints on how ABS should be implemented, however, with many developing countries supporting the development of an international treaty. Meanwhile, several developed countries have long opposed or dragged their feet with regard to negotiating text for an international treaty on ABS. The latest meeting of the Working Group made no progress in bridging these differences.

The two co-chairs of the Working Group, Fernando Casas from Colombia and Tim Hodges from Canada, produced two documents as the outcome of the meeting, which will be forwarded to the next session — one paper containing their reflections on areas of potential convergence, options, possible tools and concepts for clarification, and a paper comprising a compilation of key concrete proposals from the 17-member Like Minded Mega-diverse Group (LMMC)* and bullet points from other CBD Parties that had been made over the course of the week. Additions can still be made to this latter document.

One participant stressed that while there was no agreement on the papers, they would help the next Working Group, meeting in Geneva in January, to make progress.

The Working Group is tasked with negotiating an international ABS system by 2010.

Declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples makes waves at meeting

At the meeting, several delegates drew attention to the recent adoption of a "Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples" by the UN General Assembly, following over two decades of negotiations, stressing that it boosted the demands of the indigenous groups in the ABS negotiations. The declaration sets out the individual and collective rights of indigenous peoples, recognises their rights to land and other resources, calls for the maintenance and strengthening of their cultural identities, and emphasises their right to pursue development in keeping with their own needs and aspirations. It also prohibits discrimination against indigenous peoples and promotes their full and effective participation in all matters that concern them.

The Secretariat of the CBD had set up a fund to enable participation of indigenous representatives within the two weeks of negotiations, aimed at enhancing and strengthening their capacity to effectively participate in decision-making related to the use of their traditional knowledge, innovations and practices relevant to the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity.

Ahmed Djoghlaif, Executive Secretary of the CBD stressed that "If we are to achieve the 2010 Biodiversity Target, to significantly reduce the loss of biodiversity, in light of the climate change crises, we must fully recognise and value indigenous and local communities as custodians of the Earth's biodiversity. The active involvement of indigenous and local communities around the world is essential in the achievement of this ambitious target."

The rights of indigenous communities

Following the conclusion on the Working Group on ABS, a week of negotiations focusing on indigenous groups and their rights within the CBD as well as the future ABS framework began. Article 8(j) of the CBD addresses "the preservation of knowledge, innovations and practices of indigenous and local communities embodying traditional lifestyles relevant for the conservation and sustainable use of biological

diversity and their promotion and wider application with the approval and involvement of the holders of such knowledge, innovations and practices and encourage the equitable sharing of the benefits arising from the utilisation of such knowledge, innovations and practices."

Negotiations within the Article 8(j) Working Group saw tensions between countries focusing on national implementation and others keen to negotiate a binding international instrument. Discussions on the potential for establishing a special 'sui generis' regime to protect traditional knowledge held by indigenous communities took place in parallel with discussions on the relationship between traditional knowledge and the current international regime on intellectual property rights. One delegate noted that "regarding the 'sui generis,' positions are very diverse, some countries want a binding instrument on the international level and others want instruments to be developed first at the national level. So it is not easy to find a common ground!"

Several delegates felt discussions had already dragged on for too long and that it was time to "move on" and engage in more focused drafting, and into more substantive negotiations on traditional knowledge. Some delegates noted that since progress at the Working Group on ABS seeking to define a framework for future negotiations had been slow, the Working Group on Article 8(j) should seize the opportunity of making real strides in the development of sui generis systems for the protection of traditional knowledge and a draft code of ethics, and thereby provide a kick-start to the next meeting of the ABS Working Group. Another delegate warned that if little progress was made, and if ABS negotiations were to pick up momentum in Geneva, the Article 8(j) agenda might be left behind.

The sixth meeting of the open-ended Working Group on ABS will take place from 21-25 January in Geneva, Switzerland. The meeting will elaborate and negotiate on compliance, traditional knowledge and genetic resources, capacity-building and the nature (legally binding or not), scope and objectives of the international regime.

The ninth biannual CBD Conference of the Parties is scheduled for May 2008 in Bonn, Germany.

Additional resources

For daily reports and a summary of the two meetings, see IISD Reporting Services at <http://www.iisd.ca/biodiv/abs5/> and <http://www.iisd.ca/biodiv/wg8j-5/>

* The LMMC countries, all parties to the CBD, are Bolivia, Brazil, China, Colombia, Costa Rica, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ecuador, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Madagascar, Malaysia, Mexico, Peru, Philippines, South Africa, and Venezuela. The majority of the world's genetic resources are contained within the territories of these countries.

ICTSD reporting.

Natural Resources

CHINA UNDER FIRE AT WTO FOR LIMITING EXPORTS OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Some of China's trading partners have targeted the country's policies limiting exports of coke, steel and trace metals.

The US, the EU and Japan submitted documents at the WTO, which were discussed at a 15 October meeting of the Committee on Market Access that reviewed Beijing's implementation of its WTO obligations.

US says its steel, car, semiconductor industries disadvantaged

At the 15 October meeting, the US asked China to justify export quotas on raw materials including coke, silicon, tin, and zinc, saying the limits "significantly disadvantage" foreign producers reliant on the raw materials (the US submissions, G/MA/W/89 is available at <http://docsonline.wto.org>). According to the US, these raw materials are used to produce steel, chemicals, airplanes and automobiles, and the export quotas give Chinese manufacturers "a massive advantage over their American

competitors." Specifically, Washington expressed concern that the export limits had been imposed with "no comparable restrictions on domestic sales."

The US also complained that China has failed to notify its export quotas as required at the WTO.

According to Stephen Norton, spokesperson for the US trade representative in Washington, "We are trying to work out our problems through dialogue. It does not mean a WTO case is imminent or being planned."

The EU also asked China to justify export limits on coke and certain non-ferrous metals, and to explain potential future export limits on high-polluting steel industry products, including pig iron and steel scrap (G/MA/W/91).

Japan asks for information on environmental policies, effects

Japan expressed similar concerns (G/MA/W/90), suggesting that in light of Beijing's justification of the policy on "resource protection, environmental protection, and trade surplus reduction grounds," a failure to impose domestic restraint measures would leave China in violation of WTO rules on export restrictions. According to Japan, China's measures cannot be justified under GATT Article XX - which allows for exceptions to trade rules when the preservation of natural resources are at stake - because the measures only target exports.

Japan asked for additional specific information domestic production, consumption and restrictions in order to justify the quantitative restrictions of exports of trace metals such as rare-earths, tungsten, antimony, tin, silver, magnesium, bauxite, indium and molybdenum. The two last trace metals were covered by export restrictions since July 2007, and Japan claims that the number of export licences has been declining for all non-ferrous metals.

Background

China is the main global producer for many raw materials, including antimony, coke, fluorspar, indium, magnesium carbonate, rare earths, silicon, talc, tin, tungsten and zinc. For example, in 2005,

China produced 84 percent of the world share of antimony; one-third of the world's tin; and one-fourth of the world's zinc.

China had to agree to reviews of its compliance with its WTO obligations as part of the price of its accession the global trade body in 2001. Sources report that the delegations repeated the acrimonious exchange typical of these reviews at the 15 October meeting; the EU, Japan, and the US expressed dissatisfaction with China's answers, and China complained that some of the questions were inappropriate and even unrelated to its commitments or the WTO's mandate.

China's trading partners are also targeting the country on other grounds, including infringement of intellectual property rights and unfair subsidies (see Bridges Weekly, 17 October 2007, <http://www.ictsd.org/weekly/07-10-17/wtoinbrief.htm>).

ICTSD reporting; "US, EU, Japan press China at WTO over promises to open markets," AP, 16 October 2007.

In Brief

GLOBAL STEEL INDUSTRY LOOKING AHEAD TO A POST-KYOTO WORLD

At its annual meeting in Berlin, the International Iron and Steel Institute (IISI) Board of Directors announced a plan to collect voluntary carbon emissions data in order to devise a plan to fight climate change. IISI is entering the next stage in its "Global Sectoral Approach" for steel, starting with collecting data in order to assist with setting post-2012 carbon emissions commitments.

Steel is a heavily traded commodity, and concerns have been raised regarding relocation of industries away from countries with strict climate change policies and accompanying "carbon leakage."

In Japan, North America and Western Europe, the steel industry has reduced carbon emissions by 49 percent in the last 25 years. The global steel industry accounts for 3-4 percent of global carbon emissions. However, 90 percent of that comes from iron production, which is concentrated in

China, the EU-27, Japan, the US, Russia, India, Brazil, Ukraine and Korea.

IISI stressed the importance of involving the world's top steel producers for the initiative to be useful. According to the institute, large steel firms need to be able to maintain a competitive price; Industry is concerned, because carbon emissions regulation can involve a considerable cost burden. An IISI spokesperson estimated that carbon emissions taxes could add as much as EUR 60-70 per tonne of steel after 2012.

Negotiations on the future of the climate change regime are set to take shape at a key meeting in Bali, Indonesia in December this year.

To access IISI fact sheets on climate change, visit <http://www.worldsteel.org/index.php?action=storypages&id=226&subId=247>

ICTSD reporting; "World Steelmakers to Collect Global Climate Data," REUTERS, 10 October 2007; "Steel Industry to Report CO2 Emissions," ENVIRONMENTAL LEADER, 11 October 2007.

ENVIRONMENTAL GROUPS SUBMIT AMICUS BRIEF IN BRAZIL-TYRES CASE

Environmental groups continue to call on the EU to withdraw its appeal of a WTO ruling against Brazil's import restrictions on retreaded tyres.

In the dispute, the EU had argued that the import measures were motivated by a desire to protect local tyre manufacturers from import competition, rather than by the pursuit of genuine public health objectives as claimed by Brasilia. The panel ultimately concluded that although the limitations were in theory justifiable to safeguard health and environmental considerations, Brazil applied them in a way that amounted to an unjustified and discriminatory restriction of trade.

In its appeal, the EU complained that the dispute panel "disregarded the actual facts in Brazil and went against established WTO law," and that as a result, the ruling was unacceptably easy for Brasilia to implement (see Bridges Trade BioRes, 7 September 2007,

<http://www.ictsd.org/biores/07-09-07/story1.htm>).

A number of environmental groups* are condemning this move, and submitted an Amicus Brief to the Appellate Body on the case. The appeal was discussed at a 15 October hearing with both parties to the case.

“The EU must back down in its attack on Brazil’s environmental regulation. By putting narrow commercial interests above environmental concerns now, the EU will also compromise its own ability to protect life, health, and the environment in the future - it is really shooting itself in the foot,” said Charly Poppe, Trade Campaigner at Friends of the Earth Europe.

The Amicus Curie brief is available at http://www.foeeurope.org/publications/Tyres_Appeal_11Oct2007.pdf

*Associação de Combate aos Poluentes (ACPO) * Associação de Proteção ao Meio Ambiente de Cianorte (APROMAC) * Center for International Environmental Law (CIEL) * Centro de Derechos Humanos y Ambiente (CEDHA) * Conectas Direitos Humanos * Friends of the Earth Europe * The German NGO Forum on Environment and Development * Justiça Global * Instituto O Direito por Um Planeta Verde

ICTSD reporting.

EU AGREES ONE-YEAR EXTENSION OF DUTIES ON ENERGY-EFFICIENT LIGHT BULBS

On 13 October, European foreign ministers rubber-stamped a one-year extension of anti-dumping duties on energy efficient light bulbs imported from China, as well as smaller producers such as Pakistan, Vietnam and the Philippines.

Brussels has imposed the duties of up to 66 percent since 2001, claiming that “state intervention or other market distortions” meant that the Chinese bulbs were being sold in the EU “at less than their real value.” Consumer and environmental groups had been calling for the duties to go (see Bridges Trade BioRes, 7 September 2007,

<http://www.ictsd.org/biores/07-09-07/inbrief.htm>).

The retention of the duties for an additional year will give Osram GmbH, a unit of Siemens AG, more time to prepare for competition. The company could still ask for a lengthy review of the issue in 2008. Other companies, such as Philips and IKEA had asked for the duties to be cut.

WWF estimates that a rapid switch from traditional incandescent bulbs to more efficient lamps could reduce EU greenhouse gas emissions by 0.5 percent. The Commission acknowledges that domestic production can account for only a quarter of the EU’s demand for energy-efficient light bulbs.

“EU Gives Green Light to Disputed China Bulb Duties,” REUTERS, 16 October 2006; “EU trade chief calls for aggressive action against China,” INTERNATIONAL HERALD TRIBUNE, 17 October 2007.

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

16-20 October, Santiago del Tenerife, Canary Islands, Spain: CMS SCIENTIFIC SYMPOSIUM, WHALE-WATCHING SYMPOSIUM AND MEETING TO DEVELOP AN AGREEMENT AND ACTION PLAN FOR THE CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT OF SMALL CETACEANS IN TROPICAL WEST AFRICA. This meeting is organised by the Secretariat of the Convention on Migratory Species. Internet: <http://www.cms.int/news/events.htm>

21-23 October, Cairo, Egypt; 25-26 October, Seoul, Republic of Korea; 31 October-2 November, Geneva, Switzerland; 1-2 November, Washington DC, USA: UNEP CIVIL SOCIETY

REGIONAL CONSULTATION MEETING. These are six meetings to be held in the six UNEP regions, in preparation for the annual Global Civil Society Forum (GCSF) and Governing Council / Global Ministerial Environment Forum (GC/GMEF). In line with the subjects that will be discussed at the 10th Special Session of the GC/GMEF, the Regional Consultation Meeting will include sessions on Globalisation and the Environment: Mobilising Finance to meet the Climate Challenge and on the 4th Global Environment Outlook. Participants will also be invited to discuss options for "Enhancing Major Groups Participation at UNEP's Governance Level." Internet: http://www.unep.org/civil_society/GCSF/index.asp

22-25 October, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia: CSD REGIONAL IMPLEMENTATION MEETING (RIM) FOR AFRICA. This meeting will be organized by the UN Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA). Participants will prepare for the 16th session of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD-16), which will focus on agriculture, rural development, land, drought, desertification and Africa. Internet: http://www.uneca.org/eca_programmes/sdd/default.htm

23-25 October, Taipei, Chinese Taipei. TRADE AND AGRICULTURE POLICY REFORM. This workshop is organised by the Council of Agriculture and the OECD Trade and Agriculture Directorate. Internet: http://www.oecd.org/document/49/0,2340,en_2649_34487_32618737_1_1_1_1,00.html

27-31 October, El-Minia, Egypt: THE 8TH AFRICAN CROP SCIENCE SOCIETY CONFERENCE. General topics at the conference, which is jointly organised by the African Crop Science Society (ACSS) and the Faculty of Agriculture at Egypt's Minia University, will include crop improvement and physiology, post harvest handling and food sciences, crop protection, rural socio-economics, agricultural extension and education, agricultural economics, crop genetics and biotechnology, integration of livestock in crop production, and soils and agricultural engineering sciences.

29 October, Paris, France: ENSURING SUSTAINABLE FISHERIES - OECD MEETING. This meeting is OECD's 100th meeting of its Committee for Fisheries, a forum for discussion between experts and officials. This meeting's focus will be on how governments can implement the reforms needed to ensure a sustainable fishing industry. Contact Carl-Christian Schmidt: carl-christian.schmidt@oecd.org

29 October to 1 November, Sydney, Australia: 18TH CONSUMERS INTERNATIONAL WORLD CONGRESS. Consumer demands for corporate transparency, accountability, and responsibility have never been so pressing. This event, hosted by Consumers International, will focus on four key areas within an accountability theme: the impact of consumption on our planet, marketing, credit and debt, and what we eat. The programme has been developed with a view to providing delegates the opportunity to hear from experts, engage in debates, and attend workshops showcasing the work of consumer organisations around the world. Internet: <http://www.consumersinternational.org/>

29 October to 2 November, Trondheim, Norway: FIFTH TRONDHEIM CONFERENCE ON BIODIVERSITY. Hosted by the Norwegian Government in cooperation with UNEP, this conference aims to provide input to the CBD and its preparations for the ninth Conference of the Parties (COP-9), to be held in Germany in 2008. Its key objectives will be to: illustrate the role of biodiversity in poverty alleviation and in reaching the Millennium Development Goals, demonstrate the critical role of biodiversity and ecosystems in securing sustainable development, consider progress on the 2010 target on reduced loss of biodiversity, identify and consider possible efforts towards 2010 and beyond, present and consider difficult trade-offs, and provide insights and inspiration for implementation of the CBD Strategic Plan. Internet: <http://www.trondheimconference.org/>

29 October to 2 November, Rome, Italy: SECOND SESSION OF THE GOVERNING BODY OF THE INTERNATIONAL TREATY ON PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES FOR

FOOD AND AGRICULTURE. Internet:
http://www.planttreaty.org/gbnex_en.htm

Other upcoming meetings

13-14 November, Geneva, Switzerland: NEXT GENERATION BIO-ETHANOL. Internet:
<http://www.cmtevents.com/eventschedule.aspx?v=071148&>

19-20 November, London, UK: SCALING UP RENEWABLES: FINANCE, POLICY AND MARKET GROWTH. In the context of recent agreements at EU level and record levels of renewable energy investment, this conference will create an opportunity for policymakers, investors and financiers to examine perspectives on market trends and political drivers, as well as exploring how the sector may be scaled up still further. Internet:
<http://www.chathamhouse.org.uk/renewables>

19-23 November, Geneva, Switzerland: THIRD MEETING OF THE PERSISTENT ORGANIC POLLUTANTS REVIEW COMMITTEE OF THE STOCKHOLM CONVENTION. For more information contact: Stockholm Convention Secretariat; tel: +41-22-917-8191; fax: +41-22-797-3460; e-mail: s...@pops.int; Internet:
<http://www.pops.int>

23 November, Berlin, Germany: WHAT'S NEXT? - POLICY RESPONSES TO THE IPCC FOURTH ASSESSMENT REPORT. The conference will take place between the two important international events: a few days after the approval and adoption of the Synthesis Report of the IPCC AR4 and ten days before the UN Climate Conference will start. The IPCC Chair as well as Lead Authors from the IPCC AR4 will present the main outcomes and discuss their implications for the international negotiations and the post-2012 process with scientists, policy makers and business representatives. There is no fee for attendance but prior registration is required. Internet: <http://www.ipcc.european-climate-forum.net> and <http://www.european-climate-forum.net>

26-30 November, Australia: CODEX COMMITTEE ON FOOD IMPORT AND EXPORT INSPECTION AND

CERTIFICATION SYSTEMS. For more information contact the WHO/FAO office at +39 06 57051, or by e-mail at codex@fao.org

19-23 May 2008, Ca' Tron di Roncade, Italy: INTRODUCTION TO BIOSAFETY FOR THE ENVIRONMENTAL RELEASE OF GENETICALLY MODIFIED CROPS: EVALUATION OF SCIENTIFIC DATA AND RISK ASSESSMENT DOSSIERS. This is the first of two new biosafety workshops scheduled for next year by the International Centre for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology (ICGEB). Applications:
<http://www.icgeb.org/MEETINGS/crsform.htm>

24-28 June 2008, Geneva, Switzerland: TWELFTH EADI GENERAL CONFERENCE: GLOBAL GOVERNANCE FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: THE NEED FOR POLICY COHERENCE AND NEW PARTNERSHIPS. Individuals and organisations are cordially invited to submit a paper for the 12th General Conference of the European Association of Development Research and Training Institutes (EADI). The conference deals with the overarching theme: "Global Governance for Sustainable Development" and will be hosted by the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies (IHEID) in Geneva. The deadline for abstract submission is 28 November 2007. We kindly ask you to use the online submission tool for submitting your abstract. For further information on the conference topic, the working group sessions and the schedule is available at the conference website <http://www.eadi.org/gc2008>

September 2008, Cape Town, South Africa. RISKS, BENEFITS AND OPPORTUNITIES FROM THE RELEASE OF GENETICALLY MODIFIED ORGANISMS IN THE AFRICAN REGIONS. The second workshop of two new biosafety workshops scheduled for next year by the International Centre for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology (ICGEB). Applications: <http://www.icgeb.org/MEETINGS/crsform.htm>

20 -25 October 2008, Rome, Italy: FOURTH MEETING OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES TO THE ROTTERDAM CONVENTION (PIC COP-4). For more

information contact: Rotterdam Convention Secretariat; tel: +41-22-917-8296; fax: +41-22-917-8082; e-mail: p...@unep.ch; Internet: <http://www.pic.int>

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 at msell@ictsd.ch.

FOOD MILES OR POVERTY ERADICATION: THE MORAL DUTY TO EAT AFRICAN STRAWBERRIES AT CHRISTMAS. By Benito Müller, Oxford Institute for Energy Studies & Oxford Climate Policy, October 2007. This article looks at the recent controversy about discouraging consumers particularly in the UK from buying produce from developing countries because of their 'food miles', i.e. the transport carbon emissions (especially from air freight), and the effect that such an environmental consumer boycott could have on the efforts to eradicate poverty in these countries. He proposes a solution to the dilemma which offers a 'double development dividend', not only in terms of clean exports, but also in promoting much needed Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) activities in the poorest and most vulnerable countries. To access the article visit <http://www.oxfordclimatepolicy.org/publications/mueller.html>

FUELLING THE THREAT FOR SUSTAINABLE FISHERIES IN EUROPE. By the World Wildlife Fund, July 2007. This report analyses fuel subsidies and the impact it has on fish stocks and the fisheries sector in the EU. It is well documented that by reducing operating costs and thus enhancing fishing effort, fuel subsidies are increasing the fishing pressure on the target species and related species (e.g. bycatch) and therefore contributing to the overexploitation of EU fisheries. This does not only cause further depletion of fish stocks but will also support economically unprofitable practices and undermine future economic benefits. To access the study go to http://assets.panda.org/downloads/wwf_fuel_subsidies_to_eu.pdf

TRACKING INDUSTRIAL ENERGY EFFICIENCY AND CO2 EMISSIONS. By the International Energy Agency (2007). This is a new study of industrial energy efficiency and CO2 emissions. The analysis shows that efficiencies differ widely between countries producing similar products and using similar processes, which is a clear indication of the potential for further efficiency gains. The study elaborates on a set of powerful new indicators that look at energy use per unit of physical product. It has a number of new findings, including China's new rank as the single largest industrial producer of a wide range of energy-intensive industrial commodities. For more information visit <http://www.iea.org/w/bookshop/add.aspx?id=298>

SUSTAINABLE MARKETS INVESTMENT BRIEFINGS. By Lorenzo Cotula (International Institute for Environment and Development, September 2007). This is a series of five briefings that discuss the sustainable development issues raised by legal arrangements for the protection of foreign investment. The briefings are based on legal research by IIED and its partners. The goal is to provide accessible but accurate information for human rights, development and environmental organisations working on issues raised by foreign investment in low- and middle-income countries. The five briefings focus on: an overview; investment treaties; the regulatory taking doctrine; foreign investment contracts; and international arbitration. To access the briefings, visit <http://www.iied.org/pubs/search.php?w=&k=&t=&a=&s=IIEDBRIEF>

BIOSAFETY FIRST: HOLISTIC APPROACHES TO RISK AND UNCERTAINTY IN GENETIC ENGINEERING AND GENETICALLY MODIFIED ORGANISMS. By Terje Traavik and Lim Li Ching (Center for Biosafety, August 2007). This book provides a collection of the latest thinking concerning biosafety science. Its approach to biosafety is holistic, encompassing not only the scientific, but also the socio-economic, cultural, policy and regulatory spheres. It does not claim to give all the answers, but acknowledges the issues, and points to the uncertainties and knowledge gaps that still need to be addressed. Drawing on the new scientific field

of 'gene ecology', and advocating a precautionary approach, this book provides a foundation on which countries can start to openly and responsibly appraise these new technologies and their products. For further information visit <http://www.gmwatch.org/archive2.asp?arcid=828>

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SOUTH BULLETIN: REFLECTIONS AND FORESIGHTS. By the South Centre, October 2007. This is the inaugural issue of a re-vamped version of the South Bulletin. The Bulletin has a new look and a new format, and puts greater emphasis on sharing knowledge that matters for the South. This is an outcome of ideas shared by several colleagues, including officials from Member Countries of the South Centre in Geneva, New York, Brussels and in the capitals. The new Bulletin will enable cross-sharing of experiences and fulfil specific knowledge needs on current and emerging issues in which developing countries are stakeholders. To access the issue visit <http://www.southcentre.org/southbulletin/1-1-oct-07.pdf>