



Bridges Trade BioRes

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

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Climate and Sustainable Energy.....	1
BRAZIL, US GIVE BIOFUELS A BOOST	
WTO	3
WTO INTERIM PANEL RULING FAVOURS EU IN RETREADED TYRES DISPUTE WITH BRAZIL.....	
ENVIRONMENT AT THE WTO: MEMBERS DISCUSS INFORMATION EXCHANGE WITH MEAS.....	
Standards	5
WTO BODY DEBATES PUBLIC, PRIVATE FOOD SAFETY STANDARDS	
In Brief.....	6
Events & Resources.....	9

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Climate and Sustainable Energy

BRAZIL, US GIVE BIOFUELS A BOOST

The US and Brazil -- the world's two top ethanol producers -- on 9 March agreed to advance cooperation on the research and development of biofuels.

The agreement described biofuels as a potential "transformative force in the region to diversify energy supplies, bolster economic growth, advance social agendas, and improve the environment." The two countries did not, however, agree on any changes to the substantial tariffs that Brazilian ethanol producers currently face in the US market.

This bilateral initiative to boost cooperation on biofuels followed in the heels of the launch of an International Biofuels Forum to help develop a global biofuels market, spearheaded by Brazil and the US. The Forum also includes China, India, South Africa and the EU, which all are large potential consumers and producers.

Brazil, US bilateral cooperation

On the sidelines of US President George W. Bush's five-nation Latin American tour, US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and Brazilian Foreign Relations Minister Celso Amorim signed a memorandum of understanding to boost cooperation between the two countries at the bilateral, regional and global levels to promote the development of new biofuel technologies, stimulate private sector investment in biofuels, and elaborate uniform standards for green fuels.

Together, the two countries account for a total of more than 70 percent of global ethanol production. While only an estimated 10 percent of global production currently is internationally traded, this trade is expected to expand. Brazil remains the world's top exporter of ethanol, although US ethanol production surpasses that of Brazil.

At the bilateral level, the two countries intend to advance the research and development of next generation biofuels technologies based on materials such as wood chips and switch grass. Presently, most biofuels produced in both countries are so-called first generation ones made using food crops. In addition, the agreement seeks to promote transfer of technology to other countries wanting to produce the fuel, starting with countries in Central America and the Caribbean.

"If we fund projects to produce biodiesel and ethanol in poorer countries, and then the richer countries buy biodiesel that's produced there, then we'll see that investments put into those countries

have produced results, and even more important, generated jobs," Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva said at a press conference after the deal was signed.

US' controversial ethanol tariffs to remain

Brazilian sugarcane-based ethanol is cheaper to produce than corn-based ethanol made in the US, as well as more efficient in terms of both energy and greenhouse gas emissions. However, Brazilian exporters face a 54 cent per gallon tariff barrier to the US market, in addition to a 2.5 percent ad valorem duty. The US government provides a subsidy of 51 cents for each gallon of ethanol mixed with gasoline that is effectively restricted to domestic producers because of the tariff. Washington also heavily subsidises the domestic production of corn.

The deal signed in São Paulo did not address either the tariffs or the subsidies. Rather, the agreement mentions that issues related to domestic trade or tariffs should be raised in other fora. While Lula has complained about the tariffs as unfair, Bush told a press conference that they would remain in place. He explained that the law imposing the tariffs would expire in 2009, and that the US Congress would consider it then. The tariffs were first introduced in 1980, and have been repeatedly renewed since with some fluctuations in value.

In Washington, Senator Charles Grassley, a Republican from Iowa, expressed satisfaction that Bush and Lula had reached only a narrow agreement, as broader cooperation might have harmed US ethanol producers.

Biofuels technology exports to grow?

With domestic demand for ethanol growing both in Brazil and the US, some commentators have stressed that the immediate priority is to satisfy the domestic markets. However, Brazilian and US business groups see commercial opportunities in supplying advanced equipment to other countries, such as those in the Caribbean and Central America, as they become larger producers.

The US allows Caribbean nations and countries part of the Central American Free Trade Agreement to export home-grown ethanol to the US free of duties. In addition, under the Caribbean Basin Initiative -- an initiative established to promote development in the region by providing preferential market access into the US -- Caribbean countries

can import partly processed ethanol from third countries including Brazil. They can then process it before re-exportation to the US, in quantities amounting to a maximum of seven percent of US ethanol consumption. It is estimated that in 2006, the US imported about 600 million gallons of ethanol, of which about 200 million gallons came indirectly from Brazil through the Caribbean.

Under the São Paulo agreement, these countries would benefit from technical assistance in the biofuels sector from Brazil and the US.

Brazil-US initiative flanked by global measures

At the global level, the US and Brazil announced the creation of an International Biofuels Forum to help develop a global biofuels market together with China, India, South Africa and the EU, which all are large potential consumers and producers.

Launched at the Preparatory Committee for the UN Commission for Sustainable Development (CSD) on 2 March, the Forum aims to develop global standards to help turn ethanol into an internationally traded commodity, find ways to open markets, and encourage investment in the industry. Developing technical standards to define quality levels for ethanol is considered a first step to turn it into a commodity that could be traded like oil. According to Brazilian environment minister Antonio Simoes, the International Biofuels Forum is "a mechanism to structure the dialogue among the biggest producers and consumers of biofuels interested in promoting the creation of an international market for those products."

ICTSD reporting; "Les producteurs de biocarburants jettent les bases d'un marché mondial," LE MONDE, 2 March 2007; "U.S. and Brazil Seek to Promote Ethanol in West," THE NEW YORK TIMES, 3 March 2007; "U.S., Brazil Launch Biofuels Forum," THE ASSOCIATED PRESS, 4 March 2007; "US, Brazil sign ethanol deal," ABC NEWS ONLINE, 10 March 2007; "Bush to sign biofuels pact in Brazil," THE ASSOCIATED PRESS, 9 March 2007; "U.S. and Brazil Sign Biofuels Cooperation Accord," ENVIRONMENT NEWS SERVICE 9 March 2007.

WTO**WTO INTERIM PANEL RULING FAVOURS EU IN RETREADED TYRES DISPUTE WITH BRAZIL**

A WTO dispute panel appears to have made a preliminary ruling in favour of the EU's complaint against Brazil's import restrictions on 'retreaded tyres.' According to Brazilian newspapers, a confidential interim report circulated to the two parties on 12 March ruled that Brasilia's policy of allowing imports from its Mercosur trade bloc while banning them from the rest of the world was not consistent with WTO rules. Nevertheless, Brazilian officials have expressed a degree of satisfaction with the 300-odd page decision, suggesting that the findings would, if maintained, allow them to retain the measures with only modest adjustments.

The dispute over retreaded tyres -- old tyres that are reprocessed for a second and final use -- dates back to 2005, when Brussels filed its complaint at the WTO. Brazil has justified its import restrictions on environmental, fire hazard, and health grounds, contending that the shorter lifespan of retreaded tyres linked them more heavily than imported new ones to pollution and other adverse effects caused by all waste tyres. Claiming that an earlier ruling by a Mercosur arbitration panel compelled it to exclude Argentina, Paraguay, Uruguay, and Venezuela from the ban, Brasilia has argued that it was simply not equipped to deal with the far greater amount of additional waste that would be generated by EU imports. According to the O Estado de São Paulo newspaper, the EU supplied 95 percent of Brazil's imports of retreaded tyres prior to the ban, accounting for roughly 25 percent of its total market.

During the course of the case, environmental groups including the Centre for International Environmental Law (CIEL), as well as Brazilian human rights and anti-pollution organizations, had submitted 'amicus curiae' ('friends of the court') briefs to the panel explaining why the import restrictions were necessary. The spat has been the subject of heavy debate precisely because it sits uneasily athwart an intersection between rules to promote open trade and those to promote environmental protection. The case is also notable for being the first in which a developed country has challenged an ostensibly environmental measure taken by a developing one. Numerous Members, including Argentina, Australia, China, Mexico,

Paraguay and the US joined the dispute as third parties.

The panel agreed with the EU that Brazil's policies violated GATT prohibitions on most types of quantitative import restrictions and failed to meet the country's national treatment and non-discrimination obligations (see BRIDGES Trade BioRes, 2 February 2006 <http://www.ictsd.org/biores/06-02-03/story1.htm>). According to Brazilian newspaper O Globo, the panel also rejected Brazil's argument that it lacked sufficient capacity to safely dispose of used tyres.

Brazil maintains that its actions were justified under GATT Article XX, which spells out the circumstances in which Members may deviate from their WTO obligations to restrict trade - for instance, in order to safeguard exhaustible natural resources and public health (see BRIDGES Weekly, 14 June 2006, <http://www.ictsd.org/weekly/06-06-14/wtoinbrief.htm>). However, the so-called 'chapeau', or introductory paragraph of that article, specifies that such measures are permitted so long as they "are not applied in a manner which would constitute a means of arbitrary or unjustifiable discrimination... or a disguised restriction on international trade."

Brussels counters that Brazil's arguments are not justifiable, not only because it imports retreaded tyres from elsewhere in Mercosur: it also continues to import used tyres to convert them into retreaded tyres domestically. The EU argues that Brazil needs to improve its system for disposing of waste tyres.

In response to the report, Brazilian Environment Minister Marina Silva noted that there was a substantial difference in environmental terms between disposing of 100,000 tyres from Uruguay and doing the same for 80 million tyres from the EU.

Roberto Azevedo, a senior official in the Brazilian foreign ministry, insisted that nothing in the report would obligate Brazil to reopen its market to imports of retreaded tyres, as the EU appeared to be claiming. Despite the adverse nature of the interim ruling, the panel had affirmed that Brazil had the right to implement such import restrictions for health and environmental reasons. Azevedo suggested that this meant that some 'adjustments' would ultimately suffice to allow Brazil to maintain its import ban, according to O Estado de São Paulo.

In addition to the health and environmental hazards, substantial commercial interests are at stake in the dispute. O Globo reports that while used tyres can be imported for as little as USD 0.20, they fetch as much as USD 70 once retreaded. Brazilian tyre makers were critical of the interim ruling, even though not all of them agreed with Brasilia's arguments. A representative of the retreaded tyre industry claimed that it was conceivable that Brazil would end up having to import EU retreaded tyres, while maintaining a ban on importing old used tyres to retread.

The final ruling is expected to be circulated to the parties in late April and to the public in June. WTO dispute panels rarely reverse interim reports in their final decisions.

ICTSD reporting; "OMC obriga País a aceitar importação de pneus usados da União Européia" O ESTADO DE SAO PAULO, 13 March 2007; "Brasil perde disputa sobre importação de pneus na OMC," O GLOBO, 13 March 2007.

ENVIRONMENT AT THE WTO: MEMBERS DISCUSS INFORMATION EXCHANGE WITH MEAS

A recent meeting of the special (negotiating) session of the WTO Committee on Trade and Environment (CTE) focused on the relatively less contentious agenda item of procedures for information exchange between multilateral environmental agreement (MEA) secretariats and relevant WTO committees. Informal talks continued on liberalisation of environmental goods and services.

The meeting of CTE special session, which took place from 1-2 March, was the first following the resumption of full Doha round talks a month ago. Discussions revolved around a new US submission (TN/TE/W/70, available at <http://docsonline.wto.org>) on Para 31 (ii) of the Doha Declaration (information exchange). The submission proposed that MEA information sessions within the CTE take place on a regular basis, initially once per year. Regarding MEA observer status in other WTO bodies, the US proposed that the CTE special session develop a non-exhaustive list of "indicative questions" to aid these WTO bodies in making decisions on a case-by-case basis. Possible questions included whether an MEA contained specific trade obligations or other trade-related obligations, and if so, whether these were relevant to the particular WTO body's

scope of work. The US also proposed that the CTE special session grant seven MEA secretariats (which now have ad hoc observership) permanent observer status for the remainder of the Doha round.

The US stressed that communication between all interested ministries (i.e. transport, agriculture, customs) should be improved at the domestic level. It emphasised that enhanced international coordination, while useful and important, could not replace the much more direct and efficient means of ongoing national-level coordination between trade and environment officials. The submission proposed that the WTO secretariat, with the aid of relevant MEA secretariats, focus more assistance on building the capacity of developing country Members to foster their own internal trade and environment coordination processes.

Commenting on the submission, Switzerland wanted specific reference to the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) included in any decision on information exchange. The EU called for permanent observership for all MEA secretariats. 'On the whole,' however, one developing country delegate said, 'the US submission seemed acceptable to most if not all Members.'

Informal discussion also took place on the liberalisation of environmental goods and services (EGS). Generally, developed countries have proposed that Members should agree to a 'list' of specific environmental goods slated for liberalisation. Many developing countries fear that such a list would mainly feature goods of export interest to developed countries, and have come up with alternative approaches (see Bridges Trade BioRes, 14 July 2006, <http://www.ictsd.org/biores/06-07-14/story1.htm>). A developing country trade delegate said the recent informal talks had been 'constructive,' noting that he sensed a certain 'softening' of attitudes among delegations.

The next CTE special session is scheduled for 2-3 May. According to trade sources, India is planning to submit a revised proposal on its 'project' approach to EGS before this meeting. The chair of the negotiations, Ambassador Toufiq Ali (Bangladesh), will likely convene an informal meeting on 30 March.

ICTSD reporting.

Standards

WTO BODY DEBATES PUBLIC, PRIVATE FOOD SAFETY STANDARDS

The debate on the pros and cons of private-sector standards related to food safety continues at the WTO. With regard to government standards and schemes, Members recently discussed, among other, Australia's stringent new risk management measures on imported shrimp.

Meeting in both formal and informal settings at the beginning of March, the Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) Measures continued a debate initiated in 2005 by St. Vincent and the Grenadines on private sector standards. At the time, the small island state highlighted the challenges it faced when trying to access the EU market due to strict standards set by commercial supermarket chains (see BRIDGES Weekly, 6 July 2005, <http://www.ictsd.org/weekly/05-07-06/story3.htm>).

In the meantime, the proliferation of private standards has continued. The UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) estimates their number at around 400. It is not clear whether, and how, WTO rules apply to such standards. Yet, according to a background paper prepared by the WTO Secretariat (G/SPS/GEN/746, available at <http://docsonline.wto.org>), the distinction between voluntary private standards and official SPS measures is becoming increasingly blurry, as private requirements often become the industry norm, forcing those that do not comply out of business.

Argentina made this point during the meeting of the SPS Committee, noting that in order to be able to continue selling to large buyers, such as major supermarket chains, exporters are obliged to follow the standards these set. Members also discussed how, then, to focus technical assistance, with a number of countries favouring a focus on government requirements rather than branching out too much into private-sector territory.

The EU and Chile spoke in support of private standards, arguing that they help expand trade because exporters that comply have an easy time entering markets. The recent launch of international discussions on the development of standards for biofuels represents an example of an area in which participants hope to boost international trade and production through the development of standards (see BRIDGES Weekly, 7 March 2007,

<http://www.ictsd.org/weekly/07-03-07/story3.htm>).

Other countries, including the Bahamas, Brazil, Cuba and Egypt countered, however, that private standards pose significant challenges to small countries and traders. First, the standards are expensive to comply with; and second, they may conflict with government or international standards. In addition, the numerous standard-setting systems often do not recognise one another as equivalent, meaning exporters may need to prove compliance with several different schemes.

St. Vincent and the Grenadines circulated a new communication (G/SPS/GEN/766), noting the negative effects of private standards on small farmers in particular, and claiming that the standards are "in conflict with the letter and spirit of the SPS Agreement, veritable barriers to trade and having the potential to cause confusion, inequity and lack of transparency." The submission pointed to the compliance costs as well as the arbitrariness and lack of objectivity of the verification system -- something small farmers and economies lack the capacity to tackle. It proposed the creation of a support facility for producers in small and vulnerable economies. The paper also suggested involving producers as well as international standard-setting bodies in the development of private standards, and suggested that the standards should be more flexible, taking into account specific crops and country situations.

Shrimp imports to Australia - a case in point

Discussions at the SPS Committee also focused on measures implemented in Member countries. Among those discussed was Australia's recent push to tighten its quarantine and control requirements on shrimp imports.

The new regulations would affect imports from China and several Southeast Asian countries. Thailand said the measures were overly restrictive, and asked Australia to accept its safety testing and measures. Thai representatives made this plea both at the WTO meeting, and an Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) gathering on the same subject.

Under the SPS Agreement, WTO Members are allowed to set a standard of human and plant protection that they consider 'appropriate', but any trade restrictions must be backed by a scientific risk

assessment and applied only to the extent necessary to attain the stated goal.

Even within Australia, the new regulations proposed by Biosafety Australia, a government body, have been controversial. Scott Walter of the Australian Prawn Farmers Association (APFA) welcomed the move, saying that "Australia's disease-free status is highly valued and well worth defending in the interests of future food production and preserving native seafood resources for future generation," especially as "Australia is an island nation with a mainland coastline of 36,000km, including the World Heritage-listed Great Barrier Reef, with many species of crustaceans that are vulnerable to exotic disease." Harry Peters, chair of the Seafood Importers Association of Australia, warned, however, of shrimp shortages and rising prices due to "expensive testing and strict rules," which may well "mean the death of the prawn cutlet and cheap sweet and sour prawns."

The US, at a separate meeting of the Trade Policy Review Body examining Australia's trade policies on 5 March, also drew attention to the country's strict SPS measures. The US said "given that Australia is one of the foremost supporters of agricultural liberalisation in the WTO, we would expect it to seriously consider changes that would ensure the health and safety of its agriculture and food supply while minimising negative effects on trade."

ICTSD reporting; "Ban imported prawns, warns industry," THE AUSTRALIAN, 21 February 2007; "Prawn bans on the nose," HERALD SUN, 2 March 2007; "US urges Australia ease food trade health rules," REUTERS, 6 March 2007.

In Brief

NEW, BINDING MEASURES TO TARGET ILLEGAL FISHING

A UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) meeting has set the stage for the introduction of new rules targeting illegal, unreported, or unregulated fishing (IUU). Meeting in the Committee on Fisheries in Rome from 5-9 March 5, governments from 131 countries agreed to negotiate a new international agreement that will establish strict controls in ports where fish is landed.

Fishing without permission, catching endangered species, disregarding catch quotas or using outdated equipment are the most common IUU fishing

offences, according to the FAO. Measure to combat such practices include checking the record of boats prior to allowing them to enter a dock, and carrying out boat inspections in order to check the documentation, equipment, and cargo. Another goal set by the committee was to improve communication between ports, so authorities can keep track of repeat offenders.

The new agreement is expected to come into force following the next meeting of the committee in 2009, with negotiations taking place over the course of 2007 and 2008.

EU Commissioner Joe Borg welcomed the launch of the negotiations, noting that "The proposals on port state control are critical to the fight against IUU, and something which the EU has been calling for since the adoption of its 2002 IUU Action Plan." Sebastian Losada of Greenpeace said "The international cooperation, measures of forced fulfillment for the control in the ports, as well as a global registry of fishing ships and a regime of sanctions adapted, are between the tools that the governments need to start up. This way, we will be able to fight fleets that are literally robbing the food of some of the poorest communities in the planet and destroying our marine ecosystems."

IUU offences burden for world fisheries not only because they deplete the resource, but also because they lead to large monetary losses -- due primarily to lost revenues from fishing, and also to expenses related to enforcement.

The Committee on Fisheries also took decisions to develop technical guidelines on best practices in deep sea fisheries, to develop guidelines on the use of marine protected areas for sustainable fisheries management and conserving marine biodiversity, and to convene an international conference focusing on the problems and needs specific to small scale fisheries in the developing world.

"Countries agree to strengthen control in ports to combat illegal fishing," FAO RELEASE, 12 March 2007; "131 Governments to set nets for illegal fishers," ENS, 12 March 2007.

EU ADOPTS CLIMATE, ENERGY GOALS

The EU Spring Summit, chaired by German Chancellor Angela Merkel, has adopted binding targets on carbon emission reductions and renewable energy. Meeting from 8-9 March, the leaders of the 27 EU member states agreed to a

package based on the new energy strategy the European Commission launched in January (see Bridges Trade BioRes, 19 January 2007, <http://www.ictsd.org/biores/07-01-19/story1.htm>).

Seeking to show global leadership in addressing climate change, the EU agreed to make a unilateral 20 percent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2020 -- although they would be willing to cut emissions by 30 percent if other countries came on board -- and took on a 20 percent binding target for renewables. Countries have not yet decided on how to share the burden of implementing the targets among themselves, and the targets are not sector specific.

"I really believe now Europe can go on leading the global community in matters of climate protection," said European Commission president Jose Manuel Barroso. Merkel, for her part, is hoping this agreement will help build momentum for the meeting of G-8 industrialised countries to be held in June, which is set to address climate change. "We think that Europe could set an example for others to implement more attractive and better climate protection goals," she said, adding that "By this I mean, for example, the United States and developing countries India and China."

Meanwhile, the UK has become the first EU country to take on binding national targets that go beyond those agreed at the EU level. The UK is set to make a 60 percent cut to its carbon emissions by 2050.

"Europe Takes the Lead in Fighting Climate Change," DER SPIEGEL, 9 March 2007; "EU faces tough decisions on climate change and renewables," EURACTIV, 7 March 2007; "Spring European Council: tackling global climate change," EU WEBSITE, 9 March 2007; "EU Can Be Green Model for US, India, China - Merkel," REUTERS, 12 March 2007; "EU Agrees Binding Energy/Climate Goals - Merkel," REUTERS, 12 March 2007.

MARINE PROTECTION TO EXPAND IN SHIPPING HOTSPOT

The Mediterranean countries are planning to take action to protect marine mammals in the Strait of Gibraltar, one of the world's busiest shipping routes.

The Scientific Committee of the Agreement on the Conservation of Cetaceans of the Black Sea, Mediterranean Sea and contiguous Atlantic Area (ACCOBAMS) has come up with new proposals to

protect whale and dolphin populations of the Strait of Gibraltar, Alboran Sea, and other areas of the Mediterranean, to be considered at the meeting of the parties in October.

The Strait of Gibraltar between Africa and Europe is a major shipping route, with some 90,000 vessels transiting the straight each year. The largest area proposed for protection includes the Alboran Sea and the Straits of Gibraltar, including national waters of Spain and Morocco, and the adjacent high seas. The area is about 25,000 square kilometers and is home to large and productive numbers of all 10 whale and dolphin species found in the Mediterranean. The proposals "aim both to protect critical marine ecosystems as well as to reduce persistent threats to the whales and dolphins and the species and habitats they depend on," said Erich Hoyt, a Senior Research Fellow at the Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society, who applauded the proposals.

The Port of Gibraltar is the largest bunkering point in the Mediterranean, refueling dozens of ships a day - making marine pollution inevitable. Most recently, on 28 January, a Panamanian ship ran aground and spilled fuel over 4 kilometers of protected coastline. Six long-finned pilot whales washed up on the beaches of Spain in the last three months, a higher number than usual. Their deaths were attributed to pollution from ships.

ACCOBAMS was signed by 20 European and African countries situated around the Mediterranean and Black seas in an effort to reduce the threat to cetaceans (members of the order Cetacea- whales, dolphins, and porpoises) and increase knowledge of these animals. It came into effect in 2001.

The Spanish Navy recently strongly advised ships in the Strait of Gibraltar to slow down to avoid hitting whales. The Strait itself is the home of about 260 pilot whales and dozens of sperm whales who flock to the area to eat squid. The Strait is only 14 km wide at its narrowest point, and is the only entry and exit point between the Mediterranean Sea and the Atlantic Ocean.

ICTSD reporting; "Spain tells ships to avoid whales," BBC NEWS, 26 February, 2007; "Whale protections proposed for Strait of Gibraltar," ENVIRONMENT NEWS SERVICE, 5 March 2007; "Protection for whale and dolphin habitats," WHALE AND DOLPHIN CONSERVATION SOCIETY, 5 March 2007.

NGOS ACCUSE JAPAN OF PUSHING TOXICS IN BILATERAL TRADE AGREEMENTS

On 12 March, non-governmental group the Basel Action Network (BAN) issued a complaint targeting Japan with regard to bilateral trade agreements it is negotiating with developing countries. According to BAN, Japan has included provisions that would reduce tariffs on toxic waste, including pharmaceutical waste and waste oils containing PCBs, meaning the country could more easily export them to its trading partners.

BAN sent the note to the Japanese government, as well as the Executive Directors of the UN Environment Programme and the Secretariat of the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal saying that "For the past several years, Japan, Asia's foremost economic power, has been steadily laying the groundwork for a plan to skirt the Basel Convention and liberalise and promote toxic waste trade among their global neighbours in Asia. One of the key components of this plan includes utilisation of bilateral trade agreements."

The inclusion of toxic substances in the treaties between Japan and Singapore, the Philippines, Malaysia, and Thailand has stirred controversy, with local Thai anti-FTA activists recently protesting against what they see as waste colonialism. An official of the Thai Industrial Works Department said on 5 March that an annex would be added to the FTA to clarify that it does not contravene international law on the movement of hazardous waste.

Additional information:

BAN Non-compliance notice targeting Japan http://www.ban.org/Library/Japan_JPEPA_BNN2007_1.Final.pdf.

"Toxic backlash to Thai-Japan FTA," ASIA TIMES, 21 February 2007; "Japan Accused of Breaching Toxic Waste Trade Treaty," ENS, 14 March 2007; "Toxic waste annex to be tabled in Tokyo," BANGKOK POST, 5 March 2007.

US RICE CONTAMINATION CRISES CONTINUES

Unauthorised genetically modified material has again contaminated US rice. According to the US Department of Agriculture (USDA), seed of CL131

-- an approved GM rice variety -- contains "trace levels of genetic material not yet approved for commercialisation." The unauthorised genetic material in question is LLRICE601, developed by Bayer CropScience. The discovery of trace levels of the same material led to Japan and EU halting rice imports from US at the end of the 2006 growing season (see Bridges Trade BioRes, 8 September 2006, <http://www.ictsd.org/biores/06-09-08/story1.htm>). Now, the USDA is asking farmers and seed dealers to destroy the contaminated seed or planted rice.

Meanwhile, Mexico, which is the largest buyer of US rice, has halted imports at the border. Again, the reason is potential LLRICE601 contamination, with the Mexican government asking for certification that their rice imports are uncontaminated. This is the first time Mexico has taken such precautionary measures with regard to potential GM contamination.

The US exported rice to the tune of USD205 million to Mexico last year. It considers LLRICE601 safe for human consumption.

"GM rice withdrawn from US market," ALLABOUTFEED.NET, 12 March 2007; "Mexico testing US rice for GMO strain," REUTERS, 15 March 2007; "Mexico closes border to U.S. GM rice," FARM FUTURES, 16 March 2007.

MALI MEETING ADVOCATES FOOD SOVEREIGNTY

A number of civil society organisations recently convened in countryside outside Sélingué, Mali, for a World Forum on Food Sovereignty. Dubbed Nyéléni 2007, the event brought together more than 500 representatives of peasant and family farmers, fisher-folk, indigenous peoples, rural workers, migrants, pastoralists, women, youth, environmentalists, and consumers from more than 80 countries in late February. The meeting adopted a declaration, which calls for food sovereignty to be recognised as a basic human right.

The Forum defines food sovereignty as "the right of peoples to define their own food and agriculture policies, to protect and regulate domestic agricultural production and trade so as to attain their objectives of sustainable development, to determine in what measure they want to be autonomous, and to limit the dumping of products on their markets."

The Declaration of Nyéléni calls for a world where, amongst other things, food sovereignty is a basic human right, natural environments are conserved and rehabilitated, traditional knowledge is respected and maintained, and agrarian and fisheries reforms are made with concern for the environment and traditional labourers. The Declaration also makes strong statements against imperialism, neo-liberalism, and international financial institutions, dumping, domination of the food market by large corporations, genetically modified organisms and other technologies that undermine future production capacities.

The resumption of the Doha round in January means that the world's agricultural policies are up for debate (See BRIDGES Trade BioRes, 2 February 2007, <http://www.ictsd.org/biores/07-02-02/story1.htm>). Campaigners supporting the concept of food sovereignty, such as the Via Campesina, have, however, stressed that 'no deal is better than a bad deal' for small scale farmers.

A full summary of conclusions and proposed collective actions of the Forum will be elaborated in a synthesis document, yet to be released, and shared with the UN bodies, including the FAO, and other policy makers.

Additional resources:

The Nyéléni Declaration is available at <http://www.nyeleni2007.org>

ICTSD reporting; "Dispatch: Leaders of the 'food sovereignty' movement meet in Mali," GUERRILLA NEWS NETWORK, 25 February 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

12-21 March, Buenos Aires, Argentina: FIFTH SESSION OF THE COMMITTEE FOR THE REVIEW OF THE UN CONVENTION TO COMBAT DESERTIFICATION (CRIC-5). This meeting will focus on: review of the implementation of the Convention and its institutional arrangements; consideration of necessary adjustments to the elaboration process and implementation of action programmes;

review of available information regarding mobilisation and use of financial resources; and consideration of ways and means to promote know-how and technology transfer; and improvement of procedures for communication of information. For further information visit <http://www.unccd.int>.

19 March, Washington D.C., United States: MARINE FISHERIES AND OCEAN ECOSYSTEMS: A GLOBAL PROBLEM IN SEARCH OF POLICY. Organised by the American Meteorological Society, this seminar will deal with the following questions: What is the current condition of marine fisheries globally? What are the likely contributors to that condition? What does it mean that, as a society, we are engaged in 'eating down the marine food chain'? What are the implications of this? Is there evidence that we are losing species richness within ocean marine ecosystems? If so, what are the societal implications? Are there policies that would serve to restore marine fisheries and ocean ecosystems to a healthier state given the present rates of consumption of sea food? Would these policies be a mix of national and international efforts and, if so, over what time frame? For further information, visit <http://www.ametsoc.org/atmospolicy/EnvironmentalScienceSeminarSeries.html>.

21-22 March, Geneva, Switzerland: WTO COMMITTEE ON TECHNICAL BARRIERS TO TRADE. 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.

21 & 23 March, Geneva, Switzerland: WTO TRADE POLICY REVIEW BODY - CANADA. 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.

21-24 March, Tunis, Tunisia: MEDA WATER INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON SUSTAINABLE WATER MANAGEMENT. This conference will focus on water saving, alternative water resources such as rainwater harvesting and wastewater reuse after treatment, wastewater treatment technologies suited for decentralised sanitation in peri-urban and rural contexts or tourism facilities located in remote areas. For further information contact Ahmed Ghrabi, email: ahmed.ghrabi@inrst.mrtn.tn; internet: <http://www.zer0-m.org/medawaterconf/index.htm>.

23 March, Royal House, London, UK: Envecon: APPLIED ENVIRONMENTAL ECONOMICS CONFERENCE. UKNEE, the UK Network of Environmental Economists, aims to bring together environmental economists from academia, consultancy and public and private sectors to foster closer relationships, follow recent developments and share experience. UKNEE organizes regular seminars on topical subjects in environmental economics followed by

social evenings. For further information visit <http://www.eftec.co.uk/home.php?section=8&uknee=2>

26-27 March, London, UK: SENSE AND SUSTAINABILITY: THE LIMITS AND REACH OF CORPORATE RESPONSIBILITY. This year marks the 20th anniversary of the historic World Commission on Environment and Development report, and fifteen years since the first UN 'Earth Summit'. Organised by Chatham House in partnership with the FTSE Group, this event will review the progress towards sustainable development, and explore the scope for both scaling up, and speeding up action - by governments, business and civil society. Corporate Responsibility 2007 is the ninth in Chatham House's CR series. For further information e-mail conferences@chathamhouse.org.uk; phone: +44 (0)20 7957 5753; internet: <http://www.chathamhouse.org.uk/index.php?id=5&cid=110>.

26-28 March, Helsinki, Finland: BASEL, ROTTERDAM AND STOCKHOLM CONVENTIONS AD HOC JOINT WORKING GROUP ON SYNERGIES. This meeting is being convened as a result of decisions taken at the Conference of the Parties (COPs) of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions to investigate synergies among the conventions and is being organized jointly by the three Secretariats. For further information visit http://ahjwg.chem.unep.ch/index.php?option=com_content&task=section&id=6&Itemid=33.

28-30 March, Oslo, Norway. THE OSLO CONFERENCE ON GOOD GOVERNANCE, SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL RESPONSIBILITY. The Oslo Conference aims to take the ongoing debate about business and sustainability beyond corporate social responsibility by providing a platform for an integrated approach comprised of key players from government, business, academia, trade-unions and non-governmental organisations (NGOs). The conference is hosted by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in cooperation with the World Business Council for Sustainable Development, United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI), the Norwegian Ministry of the Environment and the City of Oslo. For further information visit <http://www.csr-oslo.org/>.

5 March to 1 April, e-conference: WATER SCARCITY AND AGRICULTURAL BIOTECHNOLOGIES. This moderated e-mail conference is being organised by the FAO Biotechnology Forum in collaboration with FAO's water programme, and will coincide with the World Water Day, which is celebrated each year on 22 March. A related background document is available online. The document gives an overview of the current status and future perspectives regarding water availability and use on Earth as well as a discussion of some major strategies that can be employed to deal with water scarcity. It then looks at the issue of water use in agriculture in more detail as well as some of the potential ways in which

biotechnology could contribute to this area (e.g. increasing the efficiency of water use in agriculture; application of mycorrhizal fungi; or improving wastewater treatment). For further information visit <http://www.fao.org/biotech/C14doc.htm> or contact biotech-admin@fao.org.

Other upcoming events

25-28 April, Rome, Italy: FAO TWENTIETH SESSION OF THE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE. Some of the topics that the session will include are discussion on environment, agriculture and water scarcity. For further information, contact the FAO office at (+39) 06 57051 or look at the provisional agenda online at <ftp://ftp.fao.org/docrep/fao/meeting/011/j9110e.pdf>.

3-5 May, Rome, Italy: INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON ORGANIC AGRICULTURE AND FOOD SECURITY. Organised by the FAO. Organic agriculture is a holistic production management system that avoids use of synthetic fertilisers, pesticides and genetically modified organisms, minimises pollution of air, soil and water, and optimises the health and productivity of interdependent communities of plants, animals and people. The conference will include presentations on perspectives on organic agriculture and a number of case studies on subtopics relevant to the theme. For further information, contact Nadia El-Hage Scialabba and Tara Moreau at (+39) 06 5705 6729 or by e-mail at organicag@fao.org; internet: http://www.fao.org/organicag/ofs/index_en.htm.

8-9 May, São Paulo, Brazil: ROUNDTABLE ON RESPONSIBLE SOY GENERAL ASSEMBLY. The goal of the Global Roundtable on Responsible Soy (RTRS) is to set up a multistakeholder and participatory process that promotes economically viable, socially equitable and environmentally sustainable production, processing and trading of soy. For further information visit <http://www.responsiblesoy.org/eng/index.htm>.

RESOURCES

If you have a relevant resource (books, papers, bulletins, etc.) you would like to see announced in this section, please forward a copy or review by the Bridges staff to Malena Sell at msell@ictsd.ch.

THE SPS AGREEMENT AND BIOSAFETY. By Melvin Spreij (FAO, March 2007). This legal paper includes a general introduction to the WTO, its objectives, functions and structure, and to the relevant WTO Agreements in the biosafety area, notably the Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (the SPS Agreement). It also presents the findings of the Panel Report in the recent biotech dispute and identifies some areas of potential conflict between the Biosafety Protocol and the SPS Agreement. The concluding remarks contain some

practical considerations on drafting biosafety legislation. To access the paper visit <http://www.fao.org/legal/prs-ol/lpo65.pdf>.

THE STATE OF DEVELOPMENT OF BIOTECHNOLOGIES AS THEY RELATE TO THE MANAGEMENT OF ANIMAL GENETIC RESOURCES AND THEIR POTENTIAL APPLICATION IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES. By the FAO Commission On Genetic Resources For Food And Agriculture (Background Study Paper Number 33, November 2006). Authored by K. Boa-Amponsem1 and G. Minozzi, this study outlines recent developments in biotechnology, and current and potential use of biotechnologies, with a view to understanding constraints, especially for developing countries, in acquiring and using available biotechnologies relevant to the use, development and

conservation of animal genetic resources. The study is accessible at <ftp://ftp.fao.org/ag/cgrfa/BSP/bsp33e.pdf>.

DESIGN FOR SUSTAINABILITY (D4S): A PRACTICAL APPROACH FOR DEVELOPING ECONOMIES. Authored by Dr. M. R. M. Crul and J. C. Diehl (UNEP, 2006). The training package introduces the Design for Sustainability (D4S) concept and how to apply it in a company setting in developing countries. It can be used by companies to pursue internal D4S efforts and by intermediaries (such as NCPCs) who work with companies. The guidance package can be used alone for information and training purposes. <http://www.earthprint.com/show.htm?url=http://www.earthprint.com/cgi-bin/ncommerce3/ProductDisplay?prfnbr=592817&prmenbr=27973>.

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