The Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety is a legally binding protocol to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). It was named in honor of a treaty-making protocol in the same city. The Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety is a protocol to the Convention on Biological Diversity, taking into account risks to human health, and specifically focusing on genetic diversity, living modified organisms that may have adverse effects on the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity, and transboundary movements of living modified organisms (LMOs) that are produced and consumed in an industrialized country. Since that time, genetically modified (GM) crops have been produced and consumed in industrialized countries, raising concerns about the potential risks of LMOs. The Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety seeks to protect biodiversity from the potential risks of living modified organisms resulting from modern biotechnology. It does not cover: products derived from LMOs, which are pharmaceuticals and substances derived from LMOs, food produced and consumed in an industrialized country, and other relevant international agreements or organizations. It does not cover: living modified organisms resulting from traditional breeding and selection. The protocol covers the transboundary movement, transit, handling and use of LMOs, which are produced by the Global Knowledge Center. The protocol has been adopted by various countries, including the United States, Canada, and Australia. The protocol has been adopted by various countries, including the United States, Canada, and Australia. The protocol has been adopted by various countries, including the United States, Canada, and Australia.

Use of Terms
Living modified organism (LMO)
Any living organism that possesses a novel combination of genetic material obtained through the use of modern biotechnology.

Modern biotechnology
The application of a) In vitro nucleic acid techniques, including recombinant deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA) and direct injection of nucleic acid into cells or organelles or b) Fusion of cells beyond the taxonomic family, that overcome natural physiological reproductive or recombination barriers and that are not techniques used in traditional breeding and selection.

Useful Websites
Biosafety Protocol (http://www.biosafety.org/biosafety)
Biosafety Clearing House (http://bch.biodiv.org/pilot)

Pocket Ks are Pockets of Knowledge, packaged information on crop biotechnology products and related issues available at your fingertips. They are produced by the Global Knowledge Center on Crop Biotechnology (http://www.isaaa.org/kc). For more information, please contact the International Service for the Acquisition of Agri-biotech Applications (ISAAA) SEAsiaCenter c/o IRRI, DAPO Box 7777, Metro Manila, Philippines Tel: +63-2-845 0563 Fax: +63-2-845 0606 E-mail: knowledge.center@isaaa.org

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**What does the Biosafety Protocol do?**

- It assists developing countries in building their capacity for managing modern biotechnology.
- It creates an advanced informed agreement (AIA) procedure that requires exporters to seek consent from importing countries before the first shipment of LMOs meant to be introduced into the environment (e.g., seeds for planting, fish for release, and microorganisms for bioremediation).
- It establishes an internet-based “Biosafety Clearing-House” to help countries exchange scientific, technical, environmental and legal information about LMOs.
- It requires bulk shipments of LMO commodities, such as corn or soybeans that are intended to be used as food, feed or for processing, to be accompanied by documentation stating that such shipments “may contain” LMOs and are “not intended for intentional introduction into the environment”.
- The Protocol includes a clause that makes clear the Parties’ intent that the agreement does not alter the rights and obligations of governments under the World Trade Organization (WTO) or other existing international agreements.

**Key features of the Protocol**

**Advanced Informed Agreement (AIA)**

The Protocol’s main mechanism is its Advanced Informed Agreement (AIA) requirement. It is a procedure that must be followed before the first intentional transboundary movement of an LMO into the environment of the importing country. The exporter must provide a notification to the importing country containing detailed information about the LMO, previous risk assessments of the LMO and its regulatory status in the exporting country. The importing country must acknowledge receiving the information within 90 days and whether the notifier should proceed under a domestic regulatory system or under the Protocol procedure. In either case, the importing country must decide whether to allow the import, with or without conditions or deny it within 270 days.

What is not subject to the AIA requirement?

- Consecutive shipments. The Protocol’s AIA only covers first time shipments.
- LMOs not intended for release into the environment such as commodities, LMOs in transit, and LMOs destined for contained use.

**Biosafety Clearing-House (BCH)**

The BCH is a website administered by the Secretariat to the Convention (http://bch.biodiv.org). It was established to: 1) facilitate the exchange of scientific, technical, environmental and legal information on, and experience with LMOs; and 2) assist Parties to implement the Protocol. Examples of information contained in the BCH include: any existing laws, regulations, or guidelines for implementation of the Protocol, summaries of risk assessments or environmental reviews of LMOs, and final decisions regarding the importation or release of LMOs.

**Risk Assessment**

The Protocol requires that decisions on proposed imports be based on risk assessments.

- Risk assessments must be undertaken in a scientific manner based on recognized risk assessment techniques, taking into account advice and guidelines developed by relevant international organizations.
- Lack of scientific knowledge or scientific consensus must not necessarily be interpreted as indicating a particular level or risk, an absence or risk, or an acceptable risk.
- Risks associated with LMOs or products thereof should be considered in the context of risks posed by the non-modified recipients or parental organisms in the likely potential receiving environment.

Risk assessment should be carried out on a case by case basis.