

**CARTAGENA PROTOCOL ON BIOSAFETY:
Sharing of Peer Reviewed Analyses of Socio-economic Impacts**

Any consideration of socio-economic impacts in decision-making must remain within the scope of the language of Article 26 of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety (Protocol), which requires that these considerations: (a) must be taken into account in a manner consistent with Parties' international obligations; and (b) must be limited to those arising from the impact of living modified organisms (LMOs) on the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity. Work on this issue should focus on continued research and information-exchange.

A. Scope of Socio-economic Considerations and Methods for Taking them into Account

- Article 26 of the Biosafety Protocol establishes the right of Parties to take into account socio-economic considerations arising from the impact of LMOs on the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity in reaching a decision on whether to import these organisms.
- However, when Parties are taking these impacts into account, Article 26.1 places several constraints on these considerations:
- Firstly, Parties must limit any consideration of socio-economic impacts of LMOs to those on the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity. Broadening the scope and type of socio-economic considerations to those beyond this limitation would be inconsistent with the provisions of the Protocol, reduce the transparency of the regulatory process, and increase the overall cost and length of time required in regulatory decision-making.
 - For example, it is appropriate for a Party to include an assessment of impacts of the LMO on protected species and/or habitats when considering socio-economic considerations in decision-making under the Protocol. Biological diversity encompasses the number and variety of life on earth and the ecological systems needed to support it. Many countries effectively address biodiversity related concerns by defining *species* and *habitats* whose conservation status is threatened as protected. A Party that wishes to assess the socio-economic impacts of an LMO on such protected species and habitats would be acting within the scope of Article 26.1.
 - On the other hand, it would be outside the scope of Article 26.1 of the Protocol to consider positive or negative effects in relation to livelihoods of local and indigenous communities, ethical considerations that may arise in connection with the use of the LMO, or, for example, any favorable or unfavorable social consequences that may arise from the use of the LMO. These elements are not related to potential impacts on the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity, as required by Article 26.1.
- Secondly, such considerations may only be taken into account consistent with Parties' existing international obligations. While the parameters of this limitation have not yet been explored in the Protocol context, consideration of existing obligations under the World Trade Organization (WTO) Agreements and those set by other international standard-setting bodies provide guidance to the Parties on this issue. Decisions and guidance provided under the Protocol must take this limitation into account and avoid outputs that would jeopardize Parties' abilities to comply with their other legal obligations.

The Global Industry Coalition (GIC) for the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety receives input and direction from trade associations representing thousands of companies from all over the world. Participants include associations representing and companies engaged in a variety of industrial sectors such as plant science, seeds, agricultural biotechnology, food production, animal agriculture, human and animal health care, and the environment.

B. Cooperation in Research and Information Exchange

- It is important that work on socio-economic considerations in decision-making are limited to the mandate in the Protocol and, in particular, to the current work plan that focuses exclusively on cooperation on determining capacity building needs, and on research and information exchange.
- An example of an existing source of online information of peer-reviewed material about the socio-economic benefits of biotechnology can be found on the CropLife International Database of the Benefits and Safety of Biotechnology (www.croplife.org/biotechdatabase). This tool provides access to research studies that meet agreed-upon criteria for high quality and highlight important impacts of agricultural biotech products and technologies. These studies can be easily searched in terms of crops, traits, countries, regions, and/or beneficial impact area (agronomic, environmental, safety and health, socioeconomic, developing countries or co-existence).

Background

Article 26 of the Biosafety Protocol provides that Parties may take into account socio-economic considerations in reaching a decision on import of LMOs, but only to the extent consistent with that country's other international obligations. Paragraph 1 further limits what may be taken into account by defining socio-economic considerations as those "arising from the impacts of LMOs on the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity, especially with regard to the value of biological diversity to indigenous and local communities." Paragraph 2 requires Parties to cooperate on research and information exchange on any socio-economic impacts of LMOs, especially on indigenous and local communities.

For more information on this and other Protocol implementation issues, please visit <http://www.croplife.org> and link to the Biosafety Protocol.