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Organisation de Coopération et de Développement Économiques  
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**English - Or. English**

**ENVIRONMENT DIRECTORATE  
JOINT MEETING OF THE CHEMICALS COMMITTEE AND  
THE WORKING PARTY ON CHEMICALS, PESTICIDES AND BIOTECHNOLOGY**

**Task Force for the Safety of Novel Foods and Feeds**

**REPORT FROM THE SECRETARIAT - DEVELOPMENTS SINCE THE 16th MEETING**

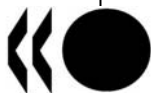
**17th Meeting of the Task Force for the Safety of Novel Foods and Feeds**

**OECD Headquarters, Paris  
9-10 June 2010**

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This document provides an update on the activities of the Task Force for the Safety of Novel Foods and Feeds (TF) since its 16<sup>th</sup> Meeting held in November 2009. It also provides information on other OECD projects relevant to its work and in particular the Working Group on the Harmonisation of Regulatory Oversight in Biotechnology (WG), as well as summarising the situation with respect to resources.

***ACTION REQUIRED:*** *The Task Force is invited to:*

- i) take note of the progress; and*
- ii) agree to provide extra-budgetary contributions to support its work.*

## I. GENERAL MATTERS

### New OECD Member: Chile

1. Chile finalised the accession process and became a Member of the OECD as from 7 May 2010. The Organisation is now composed of 31 Members.

### Observers and other Invited Experts

2. This section describes the status of observers and invited experts to the Task Force and the Working Group.

3. Israel, Slovenia and South Africa are full adherents to the OECD Council Acts on Mutual Acceptance of Data (MAD) and therefore participate in the Joint Meeting. For this reason, these three countries have the right to participate in the Task Force and other subsidiary bodies of the Joint Meeting.

4. Currently there are four Accession countries which are candidates to become members of OECD: *Estonia*, *Israel*, *Slovenia*, and the *Russian Federation*. At the same time, the OECD is strengthening partnership with five “Enhanced Engagement” countries (“EE5”): *China*, *India*, *Brazil*, *Indonesia*, and *South Africa*. The 44th Joint Meeting (June 2009) recommended that the Accession and “EE5” countries should be invited to its meeting as well as those of its subsidiary bodies, including the Task Force. In this respect, it should be noted that all these countries are already regular or occasional participants in the Biosafety and/or Food Safety activities, except for Indonesia. The Secretariat took action for identifying the relevant Indonesian Authorities (through contacts with SCBD, UNEP, FAO, Indonesian delegation at the OECD Joint Meeting), and invitations were sent for the 24<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Biosafety Working Group and the 17<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Food Safety Task Force to be held in June 2010.

5. In addition, Argentina and the Russian Federation are full observers to the Working Group and the Task Force and pay observer fees to the Organisation.

6. The Task Force is also collaborating on a regular basis with Latvia and Thailand.

### Green Growth Strategy

7. Following the Green Growth Declaration endorsed in June 2009 by the ministers from OECD countries as well as Estonia, Israel and Slovenia [C/MIN(2009)/ADD1/FINAL], a Green Growth Strategy is being developed as an horizontal project involving the whole Organisation. A Unit was established, under the leadership of the Green Growth Strategy Co-ordinator, reaching a total of nine persons as of April 2010.

8. Green growth is considered relevant during as well as after the crisis, addressing urgent challenges including the fight against climate change and environmental degradation, enhancement of energy security, and the creation of new engines for economic growth. The OED Green Growth Strategy aims to bring together economic, environmental, technological, financial and development aspects into a comprehensive framework. An interim report on the progress was delivered on 27 May 2010 for the OECD Ministerial Council Meeting (MCM): “Green Growth Strategy Interim Report: Implementing our Commitment for a Sustainable Future” and is available in English, French and Chinese, including an Overview in eight languages, at [www.oecd.org/greengrowth/](http://www.oecd.org/greengrowth/) / [www.oecd.org/croissanceverte](http://www.oecd.org/croissanceverte).

9. In this framework, it would be interesting if the contributions of modern biotechnology to greener growth (e.g. less use of chemicals, more sustainable production of commodities, fibre and wood) could be identified and highlighted. Specific resources would be required for the purpose.

## II. RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

### Staff Changes in the Biosafety Team

10. The Biosafety Unit covers three sectors of activities; manufactured nanomaterials, environmental safety, and food/feed safety. Yidan Shen-Gress, assistant, left the team for her maternity leave in February 2010.

11. Members of the Biosafety Team directly involved in the work of the Task Force for Food/Feed Safety include currently Peter Kearns, Bertrand Dagallier, Yukihiro Fukase and Charis Feeney-Orchard.

### 45<sup>th</sup> Joint Meeting of the Parental Committee (February 2010)

12. At the 45<sup>th</sup> meeting of the parental committee of the Task Force, the Joint Meeting of the Chemicals Committee and the Working Party on Chemicals, Pesticides and Biotechnology, the Secretariat provided an update on progress made by the TF on developing Consensus Documents and underlined the active participation of non-member countries in this process. The Schedule of activities of 2010 was also presented.

13. The draft Report on “Savings to Governments and Industry Document” resulting from EHS activities, and updating the 1998 version, was discussed. (*The final document entitled “Cutting Costs in Chemical Management – How OECD helps Governments and Industry” is now published and available on the public website at <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/17/59/44982952.pdf>*). The document aimed to quantify the benefits from the work of various bodies of the Division. The difficulty to calculate costs and savings, as well as the source of available data to support such calculations when dealing with the Harmonisation of Regulatory Oversight in Biotechnology, and the Food and Feed Safety, was underlined. Only a short summary of the environmental and food safety activities is contained in Chapter 3 entitled “Non-Quantifiable Benefits”.

### New Protected Websites for the Working Group and the Task Force

14. In line with a general decision at OECD level to replace the old “CWS” password-protected websites by more recent technology using the “Clearspace” system, the sites dedicated to the activities of the Biosafety Working Group and the Food Safety Task Force were reorganized and migrated to the new spaces from February to April 2010. The Secretariat created the new pages by identifying the appropriate sections and categories to be developed, and had to move all useful files one by one with harmonization of titles and relevant choice of “tags”. This exercise provided also the opportunity for “cleaning” parts of the previous sites which are no longer necessary, while updating information and making the necessary archiving.

15. For the sake of clarification, the work developed by both WG and TF bodies (Molecular Characterisation Project, common outreach activities and participation in international events, etc.) was filed in a distinct page. As the access to these protected pages was directly connected from now to the list of participants managed in the internal OECD system, the files corresponding to delegates’ entries (names and contact details) were carefully checked and updated.

16. The new sites will allow delegates to comment to draft documents directly by using the system and such comments would be easily visible and traceable for all other participants. Several options are offered, that can be complementary:

- a) add a written comment to a document,
- b) insert changes in the Word files with the “track change” system, or
- c) submit a new document proposing a modified text.

These options should improve the clarity and the traceability of the drafting process, and hopefully constitute a time saving as the comments will be made by delegations on the sites without needing to go through the Secretariat. The system will be explained during the Task Force and Working Group meetings in June 2010.

## **Progress by the Task Force**

### ***Consensus Documents***

17. As agreed at the 16<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Task Force, the three Consensus Documents on Compositional Considerations for New Varieties of Grain Sorghum [*Sorghum bicolor* (L.) Moench], Sweet Potato [*Ipomoea batatas* (L.) Lam] and Papaya (*Carica papaya* L.) have been finalised by the ad hoc expert groups and the Secretariat, and then circulated to the Task Force for final check (deadline for comments were 9, 16 and 23 April 2010 respectively). Taking account last editorial remarks and suggestions for improvements received from delegates, the documents were forwarded to the Joint Meeting for de-restriction. Pending agreement by the Joint Meeting (deadline for its comments: 28 May 2010), the documents are expected to be declassified and made publicly available at the time of the 17<sup>th</sup> TF Meeting.

18. Significant progress was made on the development of other consensus documents, thanks to the participating delegations and involved experts. The revised drafts for Sugarcane (new document, lead: Australia), revised Low Erucic Acid Rapeseed (updating the 2001 issue, lead: Canada) and revised Soybean (updating the 2001 issue, lead: United States) will be submitted to the 17<sup>th</sup> Meeting for possible agreement and recommendation for declassification.

### ***Project on Molecular Characterisation***

19. The development of a consensus document on Molecular Characterisation is a joint project of the Task Force and the Working Group. The 2007 original Draft was revised by a Steering Group (SG) composed of 19 TF and WG experts from seven countries and BIAC. As agreed by both the TF and the WG at their last meeting held end of 2009, the third revision of the document was prepared by Canada (lead) on the basis of comments received, teleconferences and exchange of information which took place in recent months with the SG, the Bureaus and other delegations.

20. ENV/JM/FOOD(2007)7/REV3 is therefore presented to the Task Force and the Working Group, and will be discussed during a Joint Session to be held on 9 June 2010 in the morning, with a view to final remarks and agreement for declassification.

### ***Outreach and Participation in Specialised Events***

21. The Secretariat participated in the following external events which related to biosafety and food/feed safety:

- Conference “GMOs in European Agriculture and Food Production”, The Hague (Netherlands), 25-26 November 2010;
- FAO International Conference on Agricultural Biotechnologies in Developing Countries – ABDC-10, Guadalajara (Mexico), 1-4 March 2010.

The OECD Biosafety work was presented during the session on “Biosafety in the broader context of biosecurity”. The presentation was shared with the OECD Secretariat who introduced the OECD biosafety and food safety (*general principles*), the Mexican delegate (Working Group) who underlined the national benefits of preparing and using the OECD Consensus Documents for environmental safety assessment (*examples of maize and cucurbits*), and the Brazilian delegate (Task Force) who emphasized the international co-operation achieved for publishing the *cassava* CD for food and feed safety.

An OECD booth was set up for the Knowledge Share Fair which was held each evening of the Conference.

On the occasion of the FAO Conference, the brochure “OECD and Risk/Safety Assessment in Modern Biotechnology” was updated, and three posters were produced to present the OECD biosafety and food safety activities and outputs.

22. Regarding future events, the Secretariat was encouraged to provide inputs to the following meetings:

- CBD-COP-MOP5 (5<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety), (to be held in Japan, 11-15 October 2010);
- 11<sup>th</sup> ISBGMO (International Symposium on the Biosafety of Genetically Modified Organisms), with the following Symposium theme: “*The role of Biosafety Research in the decision-making process*” (to be held in Buenos Aires, Argentina, 15-20 November 2010).

A proposal for an OECD Workshop “Environmental Risk Assessment, Harmonization and Decision-Making” was developed after the 23<sup>th</sup> meeting of the WG and presented to the Symposium and Programme Committees of the 11<sup>th</sup> ISBGMO. Five primary presentations are contemplated, giving 1) an overview of work and information produced by the OECD; 2) molecular characterization project; 3) environmental considerations project; 4) low level presence project and 5) Atlantic salmon project. In addition, comments by countries, governments and technology developers would provide input on their use of the work of the OECD in decision making. The Co-ordinator will be Sally McCammon (Working Group Chair and ISBGMO Organising Committee), other presenters will be members of the Working Group and the OECD Secretariat. The proposal was accepted and the Workshop is scheduled on **15 November 2010, 14:00-18:00**. Information on the Symposium can be found at [www.isbgmo.info](http://www.isbgmo.info).

Should it be confirmed including resource availability, relevant summaries presenting the activities and achievements of the OECD Working Group and the Task Force will be prepared.

### Progress by the Working Group

23. The Working Group on the Harmonisation of Regulatory Oversight in Biotechnology held its 23<sup>th</sup> Meeting on 19-20 October 2009. The proposed declassification for the Biology Consensus Document on *Cucurbita* spp. (expected in March 2010), had to be postponed. Significant progress was made on the preparation of several documents [Atlantic Salmon, *Fusarium*, Tolerance to Glufosinate-Ammonium Herbicide–Module III (Agronomic and Environmental Aspects of Resistant Plant Cultivation)], while some advanced drafts will be submitted at the 24<sup>th</sup> Meeting (7-9 June 2010) for final examination and possible agreement on declassification: Potential Adverse Health Effects of Microorganisms-Bacteria; Biology of *Picea mariana* (Black Spruce); Molecular Characterisation (above mentioned). The work continued on the Low Level Presence project, with collation of replies to the questionnaire circulated for replies by the end of February 2010 and preparation of synthesis.

24. The WG agreed on launching new projects for developing Biology Consensus Documents on Cassava, Sugarcane and Eucalyptus. The Cassava project, proposed by South Africa (lead country), resulted from the work developed by the Task Force and will usefully complete the food/feed safety document now finalised for the species. The constitution of the ad hoc expert group to be in charge of the drafting is in progress.

### III. RESOURCES FOR THE TASK FORCE AND THE WORKING GROUP

25. The OECD programmes on the Safety of Novel Foods and Feeds and Harmonisation of Regulatory Oversight in Biotechnology have, from their inception, been supported primarily through extra-budgetary resources.

26. Both programmes are largely driven through a lead-country approach. As a result, member countries make significant in-kind contributions on the programmes. The financial value of in-kind contributions is obviously difficult for the Secretariat to estimate. These contributions are made in different ways, such as drafting and making input into Consensus Documents, providing consultants for advancing work, hosting meetings and workshops, and sending experts to attend meetings.

27. The participation of non member economies also depends on these contributions because the resource from OECD's Global Forum on the Knowledge Economy, which mainly enabled to support cost for their participation until now, has been very limited. The establishment of an OECD Global Forum on Biotechnology, a concept supported by the 43<sup>rd</sup> Joint Meeting of the Parental Committee in November 2008, is being established and would provide the new framework for supporting the non member economies' participation from now. However, external potential partners approached by the Secretariat (World Bank) were not in a position to bring financial support, therefore the budget of the new Forum will remain limited.

28. In order to provide a stable financial basis for the programmes and to ensure that the Programme of Work can be continued, it is important that member countries continue to provide extra-budgetary contributions. Fund raising letters were sent to all delegations in March 2010.