

**CARTAGENA PROTOCOL ON BIOSAFETY:
The Biosafety Clearing-House**

To facilitate trade and the continued transboundary movement of LMOs, the Global Industry Coalition (GIC)¹ supports a decision calling for Parties and other governments to focus on communicating their applicable biosafety requirements by posting clear, accurate and complete information on the Biosafety Clearing-House (BCH).

A. Background and Experience to Date

- The BCH is an essential enabling mechanism for the implementation and functioning of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety (Protocol). Though 160 countries have ratified the Protocol to date, many of these countries have not yet met their Protocol obligations to provide specific information on the BCH – a web-based framework designed to provide information on national regulatory requirements and contact points, facilitate information exchange and assist those who intend to ship LMOs for release into the environment and material destined for food, feed and for processing to a Party to the Protocol.
- The GIC commends the Secretariat for their efforts to improve the quality of the structure and function of the BCH, as well as their initiatives to build awareness and understanding through tutorials and training materials. These activities contribute to the quality and quantity of information on the BCH. Additionally, the GIC welcomes continued participation in the BCH Informal Advisory Committee to do our part to assist in these efforts.
- However, the GIC is concerned that Parties are continuing to face challenges in meeting their obligations to make information available on the BCH, and keep that information up-to-date, pursuant to the Protocol's requirements. While the BCH is fully operational, the absence of information available limits its utility. Few Parties have posted the necessary information on the BCH that outlines how they intend to implement certain provisions of the Protocol, or have otherwise clarified the applicable processes for imports. In addition, much of the posted information is dated as most Parties do not appear to have a system for periodic updating of their postings. The role of the Parties' BCH National Focal Points is key to the BCH's success.
- For example, the GIC conducted an analysis of the information posted on the BCH by 20 countries. The analysis shows a wide range in the quality and reliability of information in the BCH. In some cases, no decisions were posted at all, though there are many products that have completed the approval process in those countries.

B. GIC Views on the Elements of the MOP-5 Draft Decision

- A complete and accurate BCH is essential for the successful implementation of the Protocol. If Parties post all required information and meet their Protocol obligations with respect to the

¹ 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.

BCH, it will allow governments to make timely, informed decisions regarding the importation or release of LMOs and ensure exporters have access to sufficient information to allow them to meet their obligations under the Protocol.

- For this reason, the GIC supports the development of a transparent, accessible and user-friendly BCH that provides reliable and complete information to all users. The GIC therefore encourages Parties to target the BCH programme of work and associated resources toward activities and initiatives that focus on improving the quality and quantity of information made available by Parties, pursuant to their Protocol requirements.
- Additionally, the GIC recommends that Parties prioritize posting the following information on the BCH:
 - national laws, regulations and guidelines for implementation of the Protocol;
 - contact information for the Competent National Authority for the purposes of notification under the Advance Informed Agreement (AIA) procedure, as well as any other information required by the Parties for the AIA procedure;
 - final decisions regarding import and release of LMOs pursuant to Article 10;
 - decisions on domestic use of LMOs for direct use as food, feed or for further processing under Article 11.1;
 - a declaration under Article 14.4 that their domestic laws apply, where that is the case;
 - where appropriate, a declaration under Article 13.1(b) that imports of particular LMOs are to be exempted from the AIA procedure;
 - a declaration under Article 11.6 outlining the basis on which a decision on first import of a particular LMO-FFP will be taken;
 - summaries of risk assessments;
 - other clarifying information that will reduce any additional confusion and delays in shipments of LMOs that may otherwise occur.