



What is the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety?

The Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety (Protocol) is an international treaty under the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity. It has the potential to encourage innovation, development, technology transfer and capacity-building for agricultural biotechnology, while supporting global conservation and sustainable agriculture goals. The Protocol:

- Establishes rules and procedures for the international trade in products of agricultural biotechnology – referred to as “living modified organisms” (LMOs) – including products like agricultural commodities, seeds and research materials in order to protect the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity;
- Requires that exporters of LMOs seek governmental “advanced informed agreement” before shipping LMOs for intentional introduction into the environment of importing countries;
- Requires government decision-making on imports to be based on sound scientific risk assessment and for results of such assessments to be made available through a Biosafety Clearing House;
- Requires LMOs shipped to countries that are Parties to the Protocol (made it law in their own countries), for contained use, intentional introduction into the environment or for direct use for food, feed, or processing to be identified in accompanying documentation as specified in the Protocol.

The Protocol came into force on 11 September 2003. At present, 163 countries are Parties to the Protocol, including India, European Union countries and most African, Asian, Latin American and Caribbean countries. Many of these countries – which have voluntarily undertaken the legal obligations of the Protocol – do not have adequate systems in place to handle requests for imports or to comply with even the most basic Protocol requirements. Canada, Russia, Argentina, Australia and the United States – the major agricultural exporting countries – have not joined the Protocol.

What is COP/MOP-6?

Every two years, the Parties meet to discuss implementation of the Protocol's provisions. These meetings are called Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol (COP/MOP). The Parties also work in between COP/MOPs to prepare for the discussions and decisions on upcoming meeting agenda items. The Sixth Meeting of the Parties (COP/MOP-6) will take place 1-5 October 2012 in Hyderabad, India.

What issues will be discussed at COP/MOP-6?

The plant science industry participates in the Protocol negotiations and implementation discussions through the Global Industry Coalition (GIC).¹ There are several topics with the potential to impact trade of LMOs, which are followed closely by GIC members:

- **Risk assessment and risk management** (Protocol Articles 15-16)
- **Socio-economic considerations** (Protocol Article 26)
- **Documentation requirements** (Protocol Article 18)
- **Liability and redress** (Nagoya-Kuala Lumpur Supplementary Protocol on Liability and Redress, <http://bch.cbd.int/protocol/supplementary>)

For view the text of the Protocol, go to <http://bch.cbd.int/protocol/>.

¹ The Global Industry Coalition (GIC) 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.