

ANNEX 3

TERMS OF REFERENCE

APEC High Level Policy Dialogue on Agricultural Biotechnology

Background

At its inception in 2001, APEC Senior Officials affirmed the benefits of biotechnology and called for the establishment of a High Level Policy Dialogue on Agricultural Biotechnology (Policy Dialogue). As APEC economies incorporate biotechnology into their agricultural sectors, the Policy Dialogue will continue to serve as an important forum for these economies to share information, to exchange experiences, to promote capacity building, and also to identify and begin to address common challenges associated with the responsible adoption and informed use of innovative agricultural biotechnology.

Goals and Objectives

The goal of the Policy Dialogue is for policy makers in APEC's 21-member economies to exchange information, encourage capacity building, and promote public policy development to support the responsible use, development and informed adoption of innovative agricultural biotechnology as a tool to increase agricultural productivity, raise farm income and farmer's welfare, spur economic growth, protect the environment, mitigate and adjust to impacts of climate change, and to strengthen food security in the Asia-Pacific region. To this end, the Policy Dialogue will support efforts toward the following objectives:

- Exchange information and promote capacity building regarding the responsible use, development and informed adoption of agricultural biotechnology as a tool to increase agricultural productivity, raise farm income, spur economic growth, protect the environment, mitigate and adjust to impacts of climate change, and to strengthen food security in the Asia-Pacific region.
- Promote transparent, science-based, and functioning regulatory systems to ensure safety and to facilitate investment in and the development and application of innovative biotechnologies.
- Build upon the work of international fora and existing international standards, such as the Codex Alimentarius Commission, to promote regulatory harmonization among APEC economies and public confidence in those systems.
- Support outreach and capacity building activities to help achieve above objectives.

Scope

The Policy Dialogue should be the primary APEC forum for the exchange of information and discussion of policy issues, taking into consideration economies' internal laws regulations, and capacities, regarding the responsible use, development and informed adoption of agricultural biotechnology as a tool to increase agricultural productivity, raise farm income, spur economic growth, protect the environment, and to strengthen food security in the Asia-Pacific region. This will include policies pertaining to the trade of products of innovative agricultural biotechnology.

Among other things, the Policy Dialogue will undertake work on:

- Enabling policies, risk assessment, risk management, field trial management, new traits including insect resistance management, and potential animal biotechnology applications to better enable APEC Economies to commercialize beneficial biotechnologies to address challenges of food security, climate change, and promote economic growth and regional integration.
- Risk communication to improve the ability of APEC Economies to effectively communicate biotechnology issues and nurture public confidence in biotechnology regulatory systems.
- Continued outreach on international standards and guidance to provide Economies with tools to facilitate trade of biotechnology crops, including the Codex Annex on food safety assessment in situations of low level presence of rDNA plant materials in food (LLP).
- Continued outreach on the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety.
- The Policy Dialogue will establish both short-term (annual) and medium term-term (three – five year) work plans to support HLPDAB and APEC objectives.

Structure and Membership

- The Policy Dialogue will be composed of interested government officials from APEC's 21 member economies involved with agricultural biotechnology policy.
- The Policy Dialogue will have a Chair and Coordinator who are government representatives of the current host economy. The Chair and Coordinator will be appointed with the consensus of Policy Dialogue. The Chair and Coordinator will rotate annually to the host economy. Government representatives from another APEC economy, with consensus of the Policy Dialogue, can serve as Chair and Coordinator.
- The Policy Dialogue will report to Senior Officials. For project evaluation and reporting purposes, the Policy Dialogue will report to the SOM Steering Committee on Economic and Technical Cooperation (SCE) or as otherwise requested by Senior Officials.
- The Chair of the Policy Dialogue, in consultation with Policy Dialogue members, will liaise with other related APEC sub-fora, including the Agricultural Technical Cooperation Working Group (ATCWG) and Policy Partnership on Food Security (PPFS), as appropriate, as well as World Bank, Asian Development Bank, Inter-American Development Bank, Food and Agriculture Organization, World Trade Organization, private industry, and other groups to send observers/advisers to the Policy Dialogue.

Meetings & Venue

The Policy Dialogue will meet at least annually in plenary. The duration of the meeting shall be determined by the agenda. Other plenary meetings, or subgroup meetings, may be scheduled as necessary, in order to meet Policy Dialogue objectives. If possible, this will include an annual meeting of a Policy Dialogue Steering Committee. The Steering Committee will be composed of government representatives of APEC's 21 member economies who are committed to the work of the Policy Dialogue and will include the Chair and Coordinator. The Steering Committee meeting will ideally take place in the APEC host economy. The purpose of the Steering Committee is to plan and coordinate the work of the Policy Dialogue for onward endorsement by Policy Dialogue members. A Private Sector Day, organized by private sector representatives, to meet in conjunction with the Policy Dialogue plenary, is encouraged.

Support

The APEC Secretariat will serve as the primary support for the Policy Dialogue. Virtual links to other existing institutions shall be used to increase resources. The Program Director at the APEC Secretariat will help to organize meetings, provide guidance regarding APEC guidelines and protocols and serve as a focal point for the distribution of information regarding the Policy Dialogue.

Sunset Clause

The Policy Dialogue will evaluate its effectiveness on a regular basis in line with current APEC guidelines. The Terms of Reference as well as other aspects of Policy Dialogue operations will be reviewed periodically, particularly if there is a change in situation, with a view to modification or amendment.