VOL 15 NO 07 JULY 2018

South Asia Biosafety Program

NEWSLETTER for private circulation only – not for sale

About the Conference

Join scientists, academics, researchers, and officials from research institutions, universities, government departments and ministries, and the private sector at the 6th Annual South Asia Biosafety Conference in Dhaka, Bangladesh on September 15-17, 2018. Organized under the auspices of the South Asia Biosafety Program, the ILSI Research Foundation, and Biotech Consortium India Limited, this conference is the premier biosafety meeting in South Asia.

Registration is now open and includes access to all plenary sessions, conference materials, opening and closing ceremonies, the welcome reception, lunch and tea breaks, and half day workshops.

Call for Abstracts

Attendees are encouraged to participate in this year's program by submitting an abstract for Plenary Sessions II, III, IV, or VI, or for the Poster Session. More information about the submission process is available on page 3.

Social Media

Join the conversation! Follow @ILSIRF on Twitter to see live tweets during the conference. Tweet using #SABC2018 to interact with other conference attendees.

For more details and registration information, please see pages 2-3 or visit http://sabc.biotech.co.in

Program at a Glance

September 15, 2018

- Inaugural Ceremony
- Plenary Session I: Biosafety Regulation and Capacity Building Initiatives in South Asia
- Plenary Session II: Engineering Plant Tolerance to Abiotic and Biotic Stressors
- Lightning Round for Students and Early Career Researchers
- Poster Session
- Welcome Reception

September 16, 2018

- Plenary Session III: Research Advances in the Development of Transgenic and Gene Edited Products in South Asia
- Parallel Workshop I: Science Communication - Engaging Your Audience Through Social Media (Optional)
- Parallel Workshop II: Approaches to Managing Field Trials of Genetically Engineered Algae (Optional)
- Parallel Workshop III: Synthetic Biology and Digital Sequence Information under the Convention on Biological Diversity (Optional)

September 17, 2018

- Plenary Session IV: Animal, Arthropod, and Aquatic Biotechnology - Biosafety Research, Risk Assessment and Regulation
- Plenary Session V: The Theory and Practice of Effective Science Communication
- Poster Session Awards
- Plenary Session VI: Biosafety Risk Assessment and Regulation of Gene Edited Plants
- Closing Remarks and Adjournment

Registration Form

6th Annual South Asia Biosafety Conference

September 15-17, 2018

The Westin, Dhaka, Bangladesh

Registrations are limited to 120 for the conference. Registrants that cannot be accommodated will be added to a waitlist and notified if space becomes available.

Attach mailing label from brochure,

or your business card.

Name Preferred on Badge

Complete the following if the information on the mailing label is incorrect or no label is provided.

Registrant is:

Gender ☐ Male ☐ Female

Title ☐ Mr. ☐ Mrs. ☐ Ms. ☐ Dr.

First Name

Middle Initial

Last/Surname

Job Title

Employer/Company/Institution

Address

Street

City

State/Province

Zip/Postal Code

Country

Telephone

Facsimile

E-mail

Select one optional workshop to attend on September 16:

☐ Workshop I: Science Communication - Engaging Your Audience Through Social Media

☐ Workshop II: Approaches to Managing Field Trials of Genetically Engineered Algae

☐ Workshop III: Intersection of the Cartagena Protocol and the Biosafety Regulatory System in South Asia

Registration*

Category	Fee	
	INR	US$
Industry	Rs. 6,500/-	$100
Research Institution, Universities, Individual Experts	Rs. 3,500/-	$50
Students	Rs. 2,700/-	$40
BCIL Biotech Club Members	25% discount	
Additional delegates from same organization (except students)	25% discount	
Government Departments and Ministries	No fee up to two nominations and Rs. 2,000/- each for additional nomination. Registration must be submitted through email to vibhaahuja.bcil@nic.in and confirmed by organizers. No online registration.	

**No free on-the-spot registrations.*

Please download the registration form and send it to: vibhaahuja.bcil@nic.in along with payment via bank transfer. Details for the bank transfer are as follows:

Beneficiary Name: Biotech Consortium India Limited
Account Number : 00032320008527
IFSC Code : HDFC0000003 (HDFC Bank Limited)

Cancellation/Refund Policy

Registration cancellations must be made in writing and received by BCIL no later than September 1, 2018. Cancellations received by this date are subject to a 20% processing fee. Registration and ticketed event cancellations received after September 1, 2018, are NOT subject to a refund.

Registration forms should be sent to:

Dr. Vibha Ahuja, Chief General Manager
Biotech Consortium India Limited (BCIL)
Anuvrat Bhawan, 5th Floor, 210, Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Marg
New Delhi, India - 110 002
Telephone Number +91-11-23219064-67 (Ext. 204; 205); 23219059(D)
Fax Number +91-11-23219063
Email: vibhaahuja@biotech.co.in; vibhaahuja.bcil@nic.in

Abstract Submission Form
6th Annual South Asia Biosafety Conference
September 15-17, 2018
The Westin, Dhaka, Bangladesh

Registrants are encouraged to participate in this year's program in two ways:

1. Submit an abstract for an oral presentation in:

- Plenary Session II: Engineering Plant Tolerance to Abiotic and Biotic Stressors
- Plenary Session III: Research Advances in the Development of Transgenic and Gene Edited Products in South Asia
- Plenary Session IV: Animal, Arthropod and Aquatic Biotechnology - Biosafety Research, Risk Assessment and Regulation
- Plenary Session VI: Biosafety Risk Assessment and Regulation of Gene Edited Plants.

Submissions should describe research directly relevant to the session topic.

Abstracts submitted for oral presentations will be evaluated by the conference organizers for quality and applicability. Abstracts that are not selected for oral presentations may be considered for posters instead.

2. Submit an abstract for a poster presentation during the Poster Session. Presenting a poster is a noteworthy way to share expertise or accomplishment, and poster presenters will have a dedicated time to present and discuss their work with the diverse group of attendees. All posters must convey relevance to biosafety research, environmental or food safety assessment of genetically modified organisms (GMOs), or the regulation of GM plants, animals, arthropods, or micro-organisms.

Guidelines for Submission

The following are suggestions that will contribute to ensuring the readability and quality of abstracts submitted for oral or poster presentations:

- check for proper spelling and grammar
- use a standard typeface such as Times New Roman, with a font size of 12
- begin sentences with words (not numbers)
- standard abbreviations may be used without definition, but nonstandard abbreviations/acronyms should be placed in parentheses after the first use of the terminology. It is important to keep nonstandard abbreviations/acronyms to a minimum, to allow for readability and understanding
- do not include tables, figures, or graphs in the abstract
- limit the abstract to 300 words
- organize the abstract with the following headings where appropriate: purpose, methods, results, and conclusions (e.g., for research projects) OR purpose, description, evaluation, and outcomes (e.g., for capacity building projects).

Space is limited. Abstracts will be considered on a first come, first served basis.

Deadlines

- ➡ August 15, 2018 for oral presentations
- ➡ August 31, 2018 for poster presentations

Please complete the form below and email it, **along with your abstract** *(maximum 300 words), to rf@ilsi.org and carbon copied to vibhaahuja.bcil@nic.in. You will receive a return email acknowledging receipt of your abstract and subsequently, a second email informing you if your abstract has been accepted into the program.*

I. Lead Presenter

First Name

Last/Surname

Institution

Telephone

E-mail

II. Co-Presenters (include name, organization, e-mail)

III. Submission Category

- ☐ Student (enrolled in a bachelor's, master's, or PhD program)
- ☐ Early Career Scientist (5 years or less since completion of Ph.D.)
- ☐ Other

IV. Abstract Submission for

- ☐ Plenary Session II: Engineering Plant Tolerance to Abiotic and Biotic Stressors
- ☐ Plenary Session III: Research Advances in the Development of Transgenic and Gene Edited Products in South Asia
- ☐ Plenary Session IV: Animal, Arthropod, and Aquatic Biotechnology - Biosafety Research, Risk Assessment and Regulation
- ☐ Plenary Session VI: Biosafety Risk Assessment and Regulation of Gene Edited Plants
- ☐ Poster Presentation

V. Abstract Title

** Please include your abstract (maximum 300 words) along with this form submission.*

BANGLADESH

Healthier Rice Better Life

Abdul Kader, Bangladesh Rice Research Institute (BRRI),
J.K.Biswas and Shahreen Haq, International Rice Research Institute (IRRI), Bangladesh

Bangladesh is all set for further developing the world's first-ever provitamin A-rich rice. A genetically engineered variety producing beta-carotene, Golden Rice, is a prospective new approach to help reduce vitamin A deficiency (VAD). According to the World Health Organization's (WHO) global VAD database, one in every five pre-school children in Bangladesh is vitamin A-deficient, and among pregnant women, almost 24 percent suffer from VAD. In addition to being the leading cause of preventable childhood blindness, VAD increases the risk of death from certain common infections and increases the risk of maternal morbidity and mortality. On average, Bangladeshis consume more than 148 kilograms of rice per year, more than three times the world average, making rice a good platform for delivering improved nutrition, including provitamin A, iron, and zinc.

A cup of Golden Rice (about 150g uncooked weight) could supply more than 70 percent of the estimated average requirement (EAR) of vitamin A for children.

Golden Rice was developed by incorporating two new genes, one from corn and the other from a common bacterium, that together result in the production of provitamin A (beta-carotene) in the rice endosperm (grain). The beta-carotene from Golden Rice is readily converted into vitamin A by the body on an as-needed basis, and a cup of Golden Rice (about 150g uncooked weight) could supply more than 70 percent of the estimated average requirement (EAR) of vitamin A for children and more than 35 percent of the EAR for women. Thus, for Bangladeshis who consume rice thrice a day as a staple food, with adults eating as much as 400 g daily, Golden Rice can be a complementary, food-based solution for vitamin A deficient populations.

And, if everything goes well, Bangladesh will be poised to begin releasing the first Golden Rice varieties within the next two years. Scientists at the Bangladesh Rice Research Institute (BRRI) and the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) have bred the Golden Rice trait into one of its most popular varieties, BRRI dhan29, which is now ready for wide-scale testing. BRRI also submitted an application for field release of GR2E Golden Rice to the Ministry of Agriculture on November 26, 2017, which was subsequently lodged with the Ministry of Environment and Forests on December 4, 2017, for consideration and endorsement by the National Committee on Biosafety. The application is currently sitting with the technical review committee—the Biosafety Core Committee chaired by the Department of Environment.

In the meantime, GR2E Golden Rice has been reviewed and approved for food use by three other regulatory agencies, namely Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ), Health Canada, and the US Food and Drug Administration (US-FDA). Below are the exact quotes from the assessments of Golden Rice by these national regulatory bodies:

FSANZ: "No potential public health and safety concerns have been identified in the assessment of GR2E. On the basis of the data provided in the present Application, and other available information, food derived for GR2E is considered to be safe for human consumption as food derived from conventional rice varieties."

Health Canada: "Changes made in this rice variety did not pose a greater risk to human health than rice varieties currently available in the Canadian market […] Further, GR2E would have no impact on allergies, and that there were no differences in the nutritional value of GR2E compared to other traditional rice varieties available for consumption except for increased levels of provitamin A."

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The harvesting of Golden Rice .

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US-FDA: Concurred with the assessment of IRRI and declared that "Based on the safety and nutritional assessment IRRI has conducted, it is our understanding that IRRI concludes that human and animal food from GR2E rice is not materially different in composition, safety, or other relevant parameters from rice-derived food currently on the market except for the intended beta carotene change in GR2E rice… We have no further questions concerning human or animal food derived from GR2E rice at this time."

These competent national regulatory agencies of Australia, New Zealand, Canada, and the United States, conduct their assessments based on concepts and principles developed over more than two decades by international organizations such as the WHO, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), and the Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC).

GR2E Rice is as safe for human food and animal feed as its conventional counterpart.

And more recently, although the Golden Rice application for food and feed approval is still undeway in the Philippines, the relevant assessment bodies have recently released their consolidated report. The Scientific and Technical Review Panel, the Bureau of Plant Industry Plant Products Safety Services Division, and the Bureau of Animal Industry, have concurred that "GR2E Rice is as safe for human food and animal feed as its conventional counterpart". In the same vein, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, the Department of Health, and the Socio-economic, Ethical and Cultural expert have recommended issuance of the biosafety permit for GR2E Golden Rice.

The application submitted in Bangladesh by BRRI has provided all of the information required to complete the biosafety review and field release of GR2E Golden Rice, including: the history of safe use of rice as a crop; the source of donor genes introduced into GR2E rice; the molecular characterization of the modified plant; the stability of the inserted genetic elements; characterization of proteins produced in the modified plant and their expression levels; the potential allergenicity and potential toxicity of the newly expressed proteins; the nutrient composition of GR2E rice compared to conventional rice; and the agronomic characterization of BRRI dhan29 containing event GR2E compared to conventional BRRI dhan29.

Product safety testing has been completed and regulatory applications are getting a good head start globally, and we are optimistic that the reviews of our application in Bangladesh will soon be completed and announced. Additional testing is planned for Golden Rice, including the evaluation of consumer quality traits and bioefficacy studies to determine the effect of Golden Rice consumption on various measures of vitamin A status. Golden Rice will only be made available to farmers and consumers as a complementary solution to address VAD after passing all required tests and securing all necessary approvals from regulators.

BANGLADESH

Golden Rice Informational Seminar Held at Sher-E-Bangla University

Shahreen Haq, International Rice Research Institute (IRRI), Bangladesh

Speakers at the Golden Rice Informational Seminar at Sher-E-Bangla University.

"Bangladeshi rice scientists have advanced the beta carotene-rich rice to a stage very close to release of Golden Rice." J. K. Biswas, Ph.D., an agronomist and senior consultant for the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) Bangladesh office, said in a seminar held at Sher-e Bangla Agriculture University on July 8, 2018.

The seminar was attended by about forty students and other interested faculty members, who received the latest updates on the development of Golden Rice for Bangladesh. Following Dr. Biswas' presentation, numerous questions were fielded from the audience and Dr. Md. Abdul Kader, Principal Investigator for the Golden Rice Project at Bangladesh Rice Research Institute (BRRI), was on hand to address some of the more technical aspects.

Safety issues, regulatory approval, and the economic and productivity benefits of Golden Rice were discussed. The Chief Guest, Dr. Kamal Uddin Ahmad, Vice Chancellor of Sher-e Bangla Agriculture University expressed his hope that, "As Golden Rice is as safe for human food and animal feed as its conventional counterpart, we are optimistic that the regulatory reviews of Golden Rice application in Bangladesh will soon be completed and announced."

Highlights from the Training Workshop on Biosafety Regulations and Network Development

M. Imdadul Hoque, Faculty of Biological Sciences, University of Dhaka

Guests on the dias (from left): Dr. Sultan Ahmed, Director General, DOE; Mr. Md. Abdullah Al Mohsin Chowdhury, Secretary, Ministry of Environment, Forests & Climate Change; Dr. S.M. Munjurul Hannan Khan, Additional Secretary (Environment), Ministry of Environment, Forests & Climate Change; Mr. Mohammed Solaiman Haider, Director (Planning), DOE & Project Director

The Department of Environment (DOE) under the UNEP/GEF Implementation of National Biosafety Framework (INBF) project organized a day-long training workshop on Biosafety Regulations and Network Development on June 30, 2018 at the BRAC Inn Center. Approximately 115 participants attended the event. This included representatives different government ministries, namely the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change (MOEFCC), Ministry of Agriculture (MOA), Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock (MOFLS), Ministry of Commerce, Ministry of Industries, Ministry of Health, and the Department of Environment (DOE). The NARS institutes, public and private universities, and private agri-business enterprises were also represented, with attendees from the Bangladesh Agricultural Research Institute (BARI), Bangladesh Rice Research Institute (BRRI), Bangladesh Institute of Nuclear Agriculture (BINA), Bangladesh Sugarcrops Research Institute (BSRI), Bangladesh Fisheries Research Institute (BFRI), the Cotton Development Board, Bangladesh Standards and Testing Institution (BSTI), University of Dhaka, Bangladesh Agricultural University (BAU), Chittagong University, Rajshahi University, Patuakhali University of Science & Technology, Khulna University, BRAC University, ACI Agri-business, etc.

The other important aim was to establish a network among various stakeholders, including scientists, academics, and policymakers, who are involved in agricultural biotechnology and biosafety issues in Bangladesh.

The purpose of this training workshop was to create awareness among stakeholders about recent developments related to biosafety issues and the activities being carried out under the INBF project. The other important aim was to establish a network among various stakeholders, including scientists, academics, and policymakers, who are involved in agricultural biotechnology and biosafety issues in Bangladesh.

The inaugural ceremony was held at 9:00 am. Mr. Md. Abdullah Al Mohsin Chowdhury, Secretary, Ministry of Environment, Forests & Climate Change, inaugurated the training workshop as the Chief Guest. Dr. S.M. Munjurul Hannan Khan, Additional Secretary (Environment), Ministry of Environment, Forests & Climate Change, attended the inaugural ceremony as the Special Guest. Dr. Sultan Ahmed, Director General, Department of Environment, presided over the inaugural ceremony. The inaugural ceremony started with a welcome address by Mr. Mohammed Solaiman Haider, Director (Planning), DOE & Project Director, INBF Project, during which he presented an account of the achievements obtained thus far under the UNEP/GEF-funded INBF project. He also elaborated on the purpose of the training workshop, highlighted the importance of networking, and requested contributions for the web portal developed under this project about the activities of the represented entities. He then thanked the guests and participant.

During his speech, Dr. S.M. Munjurul Hannan Khan expressed concern about the probable changes that may occur due to genetic modification. He also urged the participants to consider the pros and cons of modern biotechnology, as well as how far to take this new technology. He stressed the importance of strengthening the capacity of local scientists so that they may properly address the potential adverse effects of genetic modification. Dr. Khan also discussed the labeling issues surrounding GMO products and the importance of consumer choice. Based on his previous experience, he also suggested the incorporation of networking as a regular program of the DOE, else this initiative may end with the development project.

In his address, the Chief Guest, Mr. Md. Abdullah Al Mohsin Chowdhury, Secretary, Ministry of Environment, Forests & Climate Change, reminded MOEFCC & DOE officials to ensure the safety of foods derived from genetically engineered crops. He mentioned that Bangladesh is the first country of this region to approve a food crop, Bt-brinjal, for commercial release. He urged the scientists and members of the regulatory bodies to ensure the safety of foods derived from genetically engineered crops. In this context, he also requested concerned scientists to fully utilize the facilities at the GMO detection

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Participants at the Training Workshop on Biosafety Regulations and Network Development.

laboratory of the DOE. Mr. Chowdhury also expressed support for Dr. S.M. Munjurul Hannan Khan's proposal to establish a separate Biosafety Department under the Ministry of Environment, Forests & Climate Change. Finally, he stressed the importance of proper coordination to improve the regulation of biosafety related activities in Bangladesh.

Dr. Sultan Ahmed, Director General, Department of Environment & Chair of the inaugural ceremony, in his concluding remarks, once again welcomed the participants to the training workshop. He highlighted the importance of the conservation of biodiversity, especially for brinjal in Bangladesh. He observed that biodiversity issues will be overshadowed when the economic aspects are considered more important and expressed concern over ensuring proper labeling of GM products in Bangladesh, specifically Bt-brinjal, as, unlike in developed countries, brinjal and all other products are sold in open markets. He mentioned that a GMO detection laboratory has been established at DOE mainly to protect and detect the illegal entry of GMO crops and their products. He requested that the participating scientists provide comments and suggestions for the regulatory documents prepared under the INBF project. He also asked all participants to complete the online forms for uploading to the biosafety network database.

Other than the closing ceremony, there were two technical sessions in the training workshop. The first technical session was chaired by Mr. Md. Mozahed Hossain, Additional Secretary, MOEFCC. In this session, Mr. Mohammed Solaiman Haider delivered a presentation on the capacity building needs under the proposed biosafety policy of Bangladesh. Dr. M Khalequzzaman A. Chowdhury, National Project Coordinator, INBF Project, DOE, gave a detailed account of the biosafety guidelines and biosafety rules of Bangladesh, as well as highlighted the updates proposed by stakeholders during different consultation workshops held in Dhaka, as well as other regional workshops. Prof. Dr. Imdadul Hoque, Dean, Faculty of Biological Sciences, University of Dhaka, also delivered a presentation on issues related to the Monitoring and Enforcement Manual developed under the INBF project.

The second session was chaired by Mr. Md. Billal Hossain, Additional Secretary, MOEFCC, during which Mr. Mohammed Solaiman Haider highlighted the importance of biosafety networking. Following Mr. Haider's brief presentation, an exercise on hands-on entry of information into the biosafety network system was performed. Most of the participants brought their own laptop for this exercise, and the session was facilitated by Mr. S.M Rabiul Islam, IT Consultant, INBF Project, and Dr. M Khalequzzaman A. Chowdhury, National Project Coordinator, INBF Project, and Prof. Dr. Imdadul Hoque, Dean, Faculty of Biological Sciences, University of Dhaka. The final presentation of the workshop was delivered by Mr. Mohammed Solaiman Haider, who spoke about negotiation skills for biosafety and intellectual property rights (IPR). There were lively discussions at the end of each presentation, and the workshop ended with concluding remarks by the Director General, Department of Environment (DOE).

Mr. Md. Abdullah Al Mohsin Chowdhury, Secretary, Ministry of Environment, Forests & Climate Change, delivering his inaugural speech.

Guests during the technical session (from left): Dr. Sultan Ahmed, Director General, DOE; Mr. Md. Mozahed Hossain, Additional Secretary, MOEFCC; Mr. Mohammed Solaiman Haider, Director (Planning), DOE & Project Director.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

EVENT	ORGANIZED BY	DATE	WEBSITE
INDIA & BANGLADESH			
International Conference on Agriculture and Allied Sciences: The Productivity, Food Security and Ecology	Bidhan Chandra Krishi Viswavidyalaya	August 13 – 14, 2018 Kalyani, India	https://www.bckv.edu.in/announcement.php
New Innovations in Improvement of Vegetable Crops	Dr. Y. S. Parmar University of Horticulture & Forestry	September 5 – 25, 2018 Nauni-Solan, India	http://www.yspuniversity.ac.in/trainings/Caft_Brochure_2018.pdf
6th Annual South Asia Biosafety Conference	South Asia Biosafety Program (SABC), ILSI Research Foundation, and Biotech Consortium India Limited (BCIL)	September 15 – 17, 2018 Dhaka, Bangladesh	http://sabc.biotech.co.in/
13th Asian Maize Conference and Expert Consultation on "Maize for Food, Feed, Nutrition and Environmental Security"	Indian Council of Agricultural Research	October 8 – 10, 2018 Ludhiana, India	http://bit.ly/2sUAWPi
2nd National Biotechnology Conclave	Confederation of Indian Industry (CII)	November 30, 2018 New Delhi, India	http://www.cii.in/Events.aspx
INTERNATIONAL			
Asian Short Course on Agribiotechnology, Biosafety Regulation and Communication	Monash University"s Global Asian for the 21st Century (GA21) and the Malaysian Biotechnology Information Centre (MABIC)	August 13 – 17, 2018, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia	http://bit.ly/2L6VwHr
5th International Conference on Biotechnology Engineering (ICBioE)	Department of Biotechnology Engineering (BTE) and International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM)	September 19 – 20, 2018 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia	http://www.iium.edu.my/icbioe/2018/
The 3rd International Agriculture Innovation Conference (IAIC 2018)	International Association for Agricultural Sustainability	October 12 – 13, 2018 Beijing, China	http://iaic2018.iaas.org.sg/
5th International Rice Congress	International Rice Research Institute	October 14 – 17, 2018 Singapore	http://ricecongress2018.irri.org/
9th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties	Convention on Biological Diversity	November 10 – 22, 2018 Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt	http://bch.cbd.int/protocol/meetings/

SOUTH ASIA BIOSAFETY PROGRAM

The South Asia Biosafety Program (SABP) is an international developmental program implemented in India and Bangladesh with support from the United States Agency for International Development. SABP aims to work with national governmental agencies and other public sector partners to facilitate the implementation of transparent, efficient, and responsive regulatory frameworks for products of modern biotechnology that meet national goals as regards the safety of novel foods and feeds, and environmental protection.

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