

# South Asia Biosafety Program

**NEWSLETTER** for private circulation only – not for sale



**Great Opportunity for  
Peer-to-Peer Learning and  
Collaboration in South Asia**

**PAGE 2**

**Insights into the Regulatory  
Framework Gained at  
the South Asia Biosafety  
Conference**

**PAGE 3**

**Save the Date for ISBGMO14  
June 4-8, 2017 in Mexico**

**PAGE 4**

**Calendar of Upcoming  
Regional & International  
Biosafety Events**

**PAGE 4**

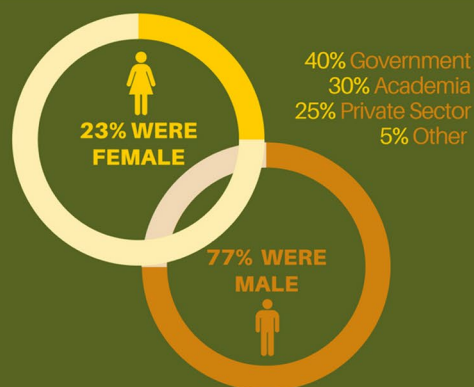


## Who attended the South Asia Biosafety Conference?



In 2016, the 4th Annual South Asia Biosafety Conference was held in Hyderabad, India on September 19-21

**210 participants  
from 14 countries  
participated**



**"This conference was  
definitely an eye  
opener for me."**

"Very useful and unique information presented in this session, that we'd be unlikely to get anywhere else."

"I learned so much from the sessions I attended. It was a really valuable experience."



## Great Opportunity for Peer-to-Peer Learning and Collaboration in South Asia

Mr. Md. Akhteruzzaman, Additional Director, Cotton Development Board, Khamarbari, Dhaka



Attending the 4<sup>th</sup> Annual South Biosafety Conference in September marked my first time traveling outside of Bangladesh as well as my second time at a South Asia Biosafety Program (SABP) annual conference. Personally, I think this conference was very well organized and successful, giving me a chance to meet with many intelligent and sharp international colleagues, experienced veteran scientists, regulatory experts, specialists in various disciplines, as well as government representatives from different countries. I cannot resist expressing my immense pleasure to be a participant at this event. I fully enjoyed the three days of interesting sessions by scientists and regulatory experts as well as discussions on various issues. The sessions I attended were very informative and insightful on their particular topics.

I would like to take this opportunity to reflect on my enriching experience in Hyderabad and summarize the ways this conference helped me, including making a comparative study of the advance of biotechnology and environmental safety practices; adopting an international perspective on how to benefit from the exchange of ideas; sharing regulatory expertise; and networking with international counterparts.

On the first day of the conference, after a very nice and scheduled inaugural ceremony, there was the first plenary session on regulation of biotechnology in South Asia. I enjoyed the presentations of regulatory practices and experiences from different countries. After this session, I had a very pleasant personal interaction with the delegates from different countries and we found that there might be some scope to work together on biotechnological innovation as well as environmental protection. After lunch, I joined the parallel session on biotechnology research and development in South Asia. I found the presentations impactful. The session was followed by an interactive poster session focused on biosafety research

**"I found at the conference that the positive interaction among the participants yielded substantive engagements. I think geographical proximity offers huge opportunity for working together for confronting common challenges and for the greater interests of the peoples of the South Asia."**

and environmental risk assessment of genetically modified organisms (GMOs). Delegates paid keen interest to every poster presentation.

On September 20, I joined many of the participants in the second plenary session on new and emerging technologies for genetic engineering. I learned about some awesome new technologies like CRISPR/Cas9 and gene drives. These were very new for me and I learned many new ideas from this very valuable discussion. After lunch, I joined the cultural city tour of Hyderabad. Since it was my first visit to Hyderabad, I preferred this option. It was an amazing tour where we visited the beautiful Chowmohollah Palace, Birla Mandir and Hussain Sagar Lake.

On the third day, I attended the plenary session on meeting regulatory challenges and approaches to regulatory support. This session was a very vibrant session, engaging participants through an interactive question and answer section. I am thankful to the chair of the session Dr. Alex Owusu-Biney, UNEP, for giving me an opportunity to ask Mr. Osman Mewett, CropLife Australia, about Bollgard III cotton and its transition period in Australia. The session was followed by a panel discussion and then the organizer declared the winner of the poster session. The last session, Dossier Preparation: Planning and Generation of Regulatory Data, was also a nice and engaging session with lot of interactive question and answer segments.

It is my observation that this event is another milestone in the SABP journey. The conference aims to provide a dominant platform for peer-to-peer learning and knowledge sharing, bringing together leading biotechnologists and environmental safety specialists to discuss ideas on the most cutting edge technologies and tools. The discussions as well as the poster presentation were helpful to set the stage for biotechnological development and environmental safety issues for future research.

*Continued on page 3*





With nearly one fourth of the world's population in South Asia, it has a critical role in the global achievement of sustainable development goals through technological innovation without hampering the natural ecosystem. I found that this conference provided a positive interaction among the participants in this global arena and yielded substantive engagements. I think geographical proximity offers huge opportunity for working together for confronting common challenges and for the greater interests of the people of the South Asia. Memorandums of understanding and joint research projects are also critical in boosting technological relations among the South Asian countries over the coming days especially given that in the 21<sup>st</sup> century knowledge is the cornerstone of prosperity, so no one should be lagging behind.

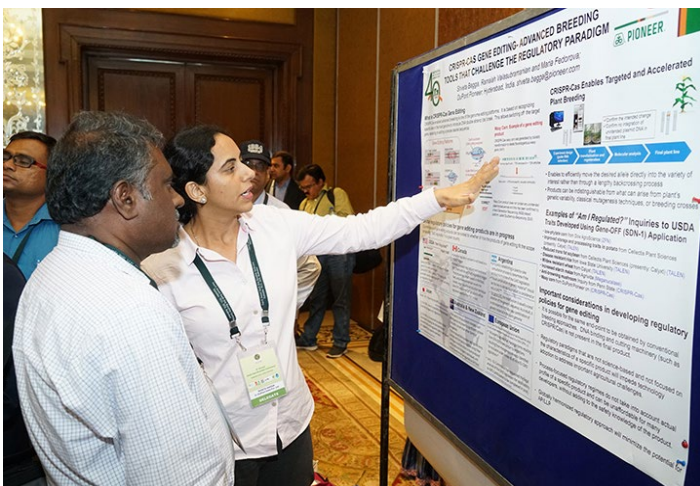
In conclusion, I would like to express my heartfelt thanks to Dr. Andrew Roberts, Dr. M. Imdadul Hoque, Dr. Vibha Ahuja, Ms. Libby Williams and the people who have made the conference successful as well as those who had shared their knowledge during the event in Hyderabad. I have benefited very much from this fantastic event.



## INDIA

### Insights into the Regulatory Framework Gained at the South Asia Biosafety Conference

Dr. Shveta Bagga, Regulatory Science Lead (South Asia) and Dr. Sarita Tigulla, Research Scientist, DuPont Pioneer, Hyderabad



The South Asia Biosafety Conference (SABC) conference held in Hyderabad from September 19-21, 2016 gave us several insights into the regulatory framework not only in India but also in other Asian countries like Bangladesh, Bhutan, Sri Lanka, Philippines as well as countries like Kenya.

The plenary sessions were well planned and addressed several significant issues. It was interesting to know that several countries including Bhutan were also in the process of making a policy for genetically modified organisms (GMOs). The challenges shared by the Philippines team were enthralling. It tells us that the biotech industry could face challenges even after cultivation approvals and outreach efforts to stakeholders should never stop. The experiences shared by the Bangladesh team while getting the Bt-Brinjal deregulated, stated that, the vision and involvement of the policy makers is crucial in making scientific progress and establishing the safety of GMOs.

One highlight of the plenary sessions was a talk on CRISPR-Cas9 technologies. It was interesting to learn how this technology can significantly reduce the time of developing new varieties of plants with desired traits without leaving a genetic foot print. A similar technology could also be applied for biocontrol of either mosquitoes or snails using gene drives. It was highly appreciative to bring to the notice of

regulators these new technologies and understand their perspectives on deregulating products that are the result of these technologies. The other scientific sessions on abiotic stress in groundnut, advances in breeding golden rice, and the status of transgenic potato in India helped us in understanding the scientific progress made in the respective fields.

From an industry perspective, the insight into reforms of regulatory framework in India was very useful. Using risk assessment guidelines to come up with a list of studies needed is a logical approach to assess the safety of genetically modified products. The session on generating the regulatory data, analyses and interpretation, along with the session on how to write dossiers and the precautions that need to be taken, by keeping all the data handy and organized, was especially useful to participants from industries who have been involved in generating regulatory data.

The poster session was also well planned and the lightning round helped the participants to convey the "take home" message in a short time. A half day workshop with specific case studies engaging the regulatory authorities and the industry would have been very useful addition to the current program.

Overall, the conference has been a wonderful experience and was in line with our expectations.

EVENT	ORGANIZED BY	DATE	WEBSITE
<b>INDIA</b>			
State Level Biosafety Capacity Building Workshop	Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change, Government of India, Biotech Consortium India Limited, New Delhi and Department of Agriculture, Government of West Bengal	November 16, 2016 Kolkata and November 25, 2016 Raipur	<a href="http://www.bcil.nic.in/">www.bcil.nic.in/</a>
Bioeconomy India Conclave 2016	Association of Biotechnology Led Enterprises	November 29-30, 2016 New Delhi	<a href="http://bioeconomy.in">http://bioeconomy.in</a>
National Conference on Trends in Nanobiotechnology – 2016	CCS Haryana Agricultural University, Biosensor Society (India) Nano and Molecular Society (India)	November 29-30, 2016 Hisar	<a href="http://hau.ernet.in/nctn2016/">http://hau.ernet.in/nctn2016/</a>
ICAR Winter School – Development and Utilization of Genetic and Genomic Resources through Biotechnology for Biotic and Abiotic Stress Management and Quality Improvement in Field Crops	University of Agricultural Sciences, Dharwad	December 1-21, 2016 Dharwad	<a href="http://www.uasd.edu">www.uasd.edu</a>
International Conferences on Nutraceuticals and Functional Foods – The Challenges and Opportunities along with The XIII Convention of the Indian Society of Agricultural Biochemists	Indian Society of Agricultural Biochemists, C.S. Azad University of Agriculture and Technology, Kanpur and Anand Agricultural University, Anand, Gujarat	December 6-8, 2016 Anand, Gujarat	<a href="http://www.aau.in/sites/default/files/Broucher_1_seminar_biochem_baca_dec_15.pdf">www.aau.in/sites/default/files/Broucher_1_seminar_biochem_baca_dec_15.pdf</a>
International Symposium on Eco-Efficiency in Agriculture and Allied Research	Crop and Weed Science Society (CWSS) and Bidhan Chandra Krishi Viswavidyalaya (BCKV)	January 20-23, 2017 Nadia, West Bengal	
<b>INTERNATIONAL</b>			
8 <sup>th</sup> International Plant Tissue Culture & Biotechnology Conference	Bangladesh Association for Plant Tissue Culture & Biotechnology (BAPTC&B) and University of Dhaka	December 3-5, 2016 Dhaka, Bangladesh	<a href="http://www.baptcb.org/">www.baptcb.org/</a>
8 <sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety (COPMOP8)	Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (SCBD)	December 4-17, 2016 Cancun, Mexico	<a href="http://www.cbd.int/meetings/">www.cbd.int/meetings/</a>
14 <sup>th</sup> International Symposium on the Biosafety of Genetically Modified Organisms (ISBGM014)	International Society for Biosafety Research (ISBR)	June 4-8, 2017 Guadalajara, Mexico	<a href="http://isbr.info/ISBGM014">http://isbr.info/ISBGM014</a>



**The South Asia Biosafety Program (SABP)** is an international developmental program implemented in India, Bangladesh and Pakistan 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.

**CONTACT SABP****BANGLADESH**

Prof. Dr. M. Imdadul Hoque  
Department of Botany  
University of Dhaka  
Dhaka - 1000  
Bangladesh  
Email: [mimdadul07@yahoo.com](mailto:mimdadul07@yahoo.com)

**INDIA**

Dr. Vibha Ahuja  
Chief General Manager  
Biotech Consortium India Limited  
Anuvrat Bhawan, 5th Floor  
210, Deendayal Upadhyaya Marg  
New Delhi 110 002 India  
Email: [vibhaahuja.bcil@nic.in](mailto:vibhaahuja.bcil@nic.in)

**UNITED STATES**

Mrs. Libby Williams  
Communications Manager  
ILSI Research Foundation  
1156 Fifteenth Street N.W., Suite 200  
Washington, D.C. 20005-1743 USA  
Email: [libwilliams@ilsil.org](mailto:libwilliams@ilsil.org)  
Twitter: @CERA\_ILSI and @ILSIRF

To receive an electronic copy of this newsletter send your name, institutional information and e-mail address to: [vibhaahuja.bcil@nic.in](mailto:vibhaahuja.bcil@nic.in)