



Healthy Plants • Healthy World

September 17, 2003

Mr. Nancy Klag
Manager, International Standards Management
PIM, PPQ, APHIS
4700 River Road Unit 60
Riverdale, MD 20737-1236

RE: Docket 03-074-1; International Plant Protection Convention Draft Standard on the Plant Pest Risks Associated with Living Modified Organisms

Dear Mr. Klag:

The American Phytopathological Society (APS), founded in 1909, is the premiere educational, professional and scientific society dedicated to the promotion of plant health and plant disease management for the common good. The Society, representing the interest of five thousand scientists whose pivotal research advances in the understanding of the science of plant pathology and its application to plant health, respectfully submits its comments regarding the proposed International Plant Protection Convention Draft Standard on the Plant Pest Risks Associated with Living Modified Organisms Pesticides (Federal Register, August 21, 2003 (Vol. 68, No. 162, pgs 50511-50512; Docket 03-074-1).

The scientists that the Society represents and others in related plant health professions have a major stake in the development, ecology, management, and utilization of living modified organisms (LMOs). The ability for this group of professionals to address their vocational pursuits in plant health research, extension and instruction and the needs of their clientele are impacted by difficulties encountered in moving plant material or microorganisms throughout the world in research and commerce whether they be LMO or non-LMOs. At present, the rules that control the movement of LMOs are established by regional or bilateral agreements between countries. As international standards do not exist, APS welcomes the efforts of the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) to provide more detailed guidance to National Plant Protection Organizations on the assessment of living modified organisms (LMOs) regarding pest risk. The IPPC is recognized as the standard-setting body for international phytosanitary (plant health) issues by the World Trade Organization and is an appropriate body to establish comparable standards for LMOs.

The chosen approach taken by IPPC is to draft the LMO standard as a supplement to an existing IPPC standard, International Standard for Phytosanitary Measures (ISPM) No. 11, Pest Risk Analysis for Quarantine Pests. Although not without difficulties in its implementation, the quarantine standard is a logical, objective system for pest risk analysis of quarantine pests. An important feature of the draft document is the efforts made to ensure that not all LMOs are classed as potential quarantine pests. This is accomplished by definitions of the characteristics of LMOs that would or would not make them potential pests. APS also supports the statement that LMOs under contained environment conditions are not classed as pests for the purpose of inclusion of LMOs in the IPPC standard. Successful implementation of the proposed system will require accurate and accessible scientific information. This has long been a major problem in the use of the IPPC quarantine system as a large proportion of international phytosanitary regulations are not supported on sound science. The situation is improving in the quarantine arena with the availability of comprehensive, easily accessible information systems such as the CAB International

Crop Protection Compendium. However, while the basic information on the genome, transcripts, proteins, and metabolites of LMOs may be readily accessible, information on the ecological and environmental consequences of introducing LMOs will be limited for the foreseeable future, particularly for developing countries.

A consistent concern expressed in the comments at the August 23 meeting on this LMO standard (sponsored by USDA-APHIS) was the lack of cooperation between ICPP and organizations such as the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) that address human health and environmental aspects of LMOs. It was indicated at the meeting that activities to resolve these concerns fall outside the mandate of the ICPP. It was noted that such concerns were overstated as health and environment issues and would have to be resolved before LMOs reach the stage where they would be moving in international channels.

The APS appreciates the opportunity to provide comment on this issue and applauds the USDA-APHIS for seeking input on regulation regarding LMOs. Developing regulations on the movement of LMOs that are science based will benefit all of society.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gary C. Bergstrom". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Gary C. Bergstrom
President

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