

# **Report on the visit of the IT Regional Advisor for Biosafety Clearing-House Training Workshop and Development of BCH Website**

*February 12-15, 2008*

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## **Background**

Guyana, being a signatory to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) in 1994, has initiated the institutional coordination among its stakeholders in terms of increasing awareness of the Biosafety Clearing House and Guyana's obligations to the project.

The BCH is a global project implemented by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) with financial support from the Global Environment Facility (GEF) to establish the National BCH.

It is considered that the successful implementation of this project is necessary for Guyana's development since it will assist in reducing and eliminating potential risk resulting from biotechnology and its products which may result in negative impacts to the environment and human health.

The awareness building exercises were started in 2007 with the aim to provide information on Biotechnology and the Cartagena Protocol, sensitize the participants about Guyana's National obligations for the BCH project and accessing and managing the BCH Portal by the widest range of stakeholders that include BCH Task Force Members, Government Agencies, Media Houses, Private and Government-run Business Houses and NGOs.

The recent visit of the IT Regional Advisor, Dr. Anurag Sinha, included the following activities:

1. Conducting Training Workshop for Stakeholders of the BCH Project.
2. Conducting Operational Test for the agencies with the distributed equipment.
3. Development of the BCH Website for Guyana.
4. Demonstration of the Hermes Software to the NRMD (Biodiversity Unit) Staff.
5. Conducting closing out procedure of the BCH Project.

## **Conducting the Training Workshop**

### **Objectives of the Training Workshop at Centre of Information Technology, University of Guyana, February 12-13, 2008**

- To build the awareness of the BCH and Guyana's obligations to the project;
- To introduce the stakeholders to the concept of Living Modified Organisms (LMOs) and Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs) and their importance for Guyana;
- To surf the BCH Portal and access information on the BCH;

- To register and manage information on the BCH Portal; and
- To demonstrate the Hermes Software to develop and manage the BCH Website for Guyana.

## **PRESENTATIONS**

The IT Regional Advisor, Dr. Anurag Sinha, in his introductory session explained the mechanism of the Clearing House and the role of BCH. In addition, other relevant information, e.g. benefits and obligations of the Parties under the Cartagena Protocol, information sharing, etc. were disseminated.

In the following sessions, the participants were introduced to the concepts on how to surf and find information from the BCH Central Portal, the Management Centre and its overview, and entering national information into the Portal. Several case studies were used for the purpose of demonstration, and hands-on training were given to the participants.

## **Participants**

Participants included representatives from the following Organizations:

1. Environmental Protection Agency
2. National Agricultural Research Institute
3. Guyana Consumers Association
4. Ministry of Health
5. Ministry of Agriculture
6. Guyana Revenue Authority
7. Guyana Sugar Co-operation
8. Guyana Rice Development Board
9. Ministry of Foreign Affairs
10. Food and Drugs Department

The objectives of the training workshops were achieved and participants were encouraged to review the Articles under the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety.

## **Introduction to Hermes and Development of BCH Website for Guyana**

A session was conducted to demonstrate and give an overview of the Hermes Software to the NRMD (Biodiversity Unit) staff in which the IT Regional Advisor introduced the staff to the software through different modules. The modules included Accessing Hermes, Issues related to the Administrators' Authentication, Content Management, etc.

During these sessions, he also hosted the BCH Webpage for Guyana and provided hands-on training on this to the NRMD Staff.

### **On Site Operational Tests**

The IT Regional Advisor visited four sites of the National Competent Authorities, viz. National Agricultural Research Institute (NARI), University of Guyana (UG), Ministry of Health (MoH) and Guyana Consumers' Association, where he conducted the Operational Tests of the equipment provided to these agencies.

### **Conducting Closing out procedure of BCH Project**

The IT Regional Advisor also assisted in filling several forms related to the closing out of this project for the purpose of obtaining the remaining 25 per cent of the fund allocated to Guyana from UNEP.