

Seminar on New Plant Breeding Techniques

Location: University of Philippines Diliman, Manila

Date: 4 December 2014

Attendee: Dr Janet Gorst

Purpose

The Seminar was organised by the Biotechnology Coalition of the Philippines and the Philippines Department of Agriculture as part of a general mission to promote the safe and responsible use of modern biotechnology in the Philippines. FSANZ was invited to provide a resource speaker to share and discuss current thinking and science-based views of FSANZ towards the regulation of these new breeding technologies. Dr Gorst presented a 45 minute paper entitled: *Perspectives on New Plant Breeding Techniques in Australia: FSANZ*.

Outcomes

Attendees at the Seminar included policymakers, regulators, members of the academic/scientific community, and technology developers from both the public and private sectors of the Philippines, as well as the neighbouring countries of Viet Nam, and Indonesia. There was extensive discussion at the conclusion of the Seminar and much interest in how FSANZ may approach the regulation of the techniques.

Benefit for FSANZ

This was a timely seminar as FSANZ is currently deliberating on the outcomes of the two workshops on new breeding techniques that were organised by the GM Team in 2012 and 2013. In addition to the seminar there was good opportunity to talk to regulators generally about the GM food regulatory system in the Philippines

Dr Gorst also took the opportunity, while in Manila to spend a day (5 December) visiting the International Rice Research Institute, particularly to have discussions with the Biotechnology Laboratory who are currently overseeing the collection of regulatory data for Golden Rice as well as developing other genetically modified rice lines. The team had some specific questions about the FSANZ regulatory requirements for GM foods and indicated that an application to FSANZ for Golden Rice is likely in a few years' time.

Seminars by the International Life Sciences Institute, South-East Asia Region

Location: Singapore and Kuala Lumpur

Date: 5 & 7 September 2016

Attendee: Dr Janet Gorst

Purpose

Two back-to-back six-hour Seminars entitled *Sustainable Food Security in ASEAN – Role of Genetics and New Technologies* were organised by the International Life Sciences Institute - South East Asia Region (ILSI-SEAR) and held in Singapore and Kuala Lumpur. The objective of the seminars was to facilitate dialogue among different stakeholders in the region in view of some of the new technologies that are being introduced for the improvement of food crops, as well as the potential implication on safety assessment and regulations.

In addition, immediately following each Symposium, there was a closed-door session to allow regulators, risk assessors and invited scientists from Singapore and Malaysia to discuss with the guest speakers, the safety assessment of both existing technologies and newer technologies (e.g. gene editing).

Outcomes

Dr Gorst gave a presentation at each location entitled *Perspectives on Regulation of Technologies for Food Crop Improvement* that included an overview of the regulation of stacked transgenic products under Standard 1.5.2 and of the current situation and constraints regarding the regulation of new breeding techniques such as gene editing. These topics were further discussed in the closed-door sessions.

Benefit for FSANZ

FSANZ is regarded as a food regulatory leader in the Asian region and those countries such as Malaysia and Singapore that are still finalising regulatory systems for GM foods look to FSANZ for guidance. Seminars such as these provide an excellent opportunity for first-hand interaction and frank exchange of information and experience between FSANZ and other groups in the region that are grappling with GM food regulatory issues. In particular, the current issue of how to deal with the regulation (or not) of food produced using new breeding technologies, is highly relevant as any decisions made have the potential to impact on trade within the region. Sharing thoughts on this issue before decisions are made is therefore beneficial for both FSANZ and the regulatory parties from other countries as it will help to inform the decision process.