

WHAT IS BEING DONE IN THE CARIBBEAN IN TERMS OF BIOSAFETY CAPACITY BUILDING?

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF), is supporting a Regional project to assist the further development of national biosafety laws and guidelines. Similarly, the UNEP-GEF Biosafety Clearing-House (BCH) project has made remarkable in-roads in many countries in facilitating access to biosafety information and helping parties of the CPB in its implementation.

The activities of the Regional projects are targeted towards facilitating the following:

- Harmonised national policies to facilitate intra-/inter-regional trade and the processing of applications.
- Consideration of socio-cultural-economic differences amongst the project countries, whereby regional guidelines or recommendations should make provisions for countries to express these differences in their national biosafety frameworks and supporting legislation and regulations, Compatibility of regional standards with international standards. Provisions should however, be made for those countries, if any, who wish to set higher standards that do not have a negative impact on trade.
- Establishment of a Caribbean Centre for Biosafety (CCB) , whose activities could include advising regional countries with respect to guidelines, standards, legislation, and trade negotiations.
- Pooling of resources in the region, with the CCB maintaining a Roster of Experts in the region, to be used as required by countries. The CCB should also assist with the implementing of capacity building activities, public awareness and communication strategies, at all levels.
- Collaboration between regional and hemispheric counterparts in Latin America with respect to testing, laboratory facilities, training and other capacity building initiatives.

The CCB is expected to serve as a virtual information hub for the Caribbean region. It is also envisioned that in keeping with the proposals made in the laboratory strategy developed, that under a Memorandum of Understanding, designated reference laboratories located on the three Campuses of the University of the West Indies (UWI) in Barbados, Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago, could provide support to countries in the Region in areas such as advanced GMO testing, in-service training and short-term attachments. A Master of Science (MSc) programme in Biosafety has also been developed at the UWI as part of the project, and started receiving students in the 2014/2015 academic year.

