



Minutes of the second meeting of the European GMO Socio-Economics Bureau (Seville, 25-26 March 2014)

Participants

- Representatives from HU, NL, UK, ES, BE (only 1st day), RO, SE, PT, DE, AT, SI, DK, FR and NO.
- Representatives from the European Commission.
- Prof Lynn Frewer (Newcastle University) (only 1st day).
- Prof Julian Park (Reading University) (only 1st day)
- Kristine Van Herck (Centre for European Policy Studies) (only 1st day).
- Apologies from Prof Nicholas Kalaitzandonakes (University of Missouri).

Introduction by JRC-IPTS

- 1) Overview of ESEB work since the kick-off meeting in January 2013.
- 2) Presentation of the agenda of the meeting.
- 3) Tour de table for introduction of participants.

Presentation by the European Commission

DG SANCO gave an update on the latest developments of the proposal for new rules for the authorisation of GMOs for cultivation. It was mentioned that a political decision regarding the cultivation proposal could be expected to be reached in 2014. Since potential grounds for national opt-outs may include socio-economic impacts, the work of ESEB could become valuable.

Regarding changes in the number of cultivation dossiers in the regulatory pipeline, DG SANCO reported that currently this pipeline consists of Bt maize, HT maize and HT cotton. This changes need to be reflected in the ESEB work programme.

Finally, DG SANCO and AT mentioned that during the latest meeting on the Cartagena Protocol no common definition of socio-economic impacts was agreed on.

Open Session with invited scientists

Prof Julian Park provided an overview of the activities of the FP7-funded AMIGA project related to socio-economic impacts of the cultivation of GM crops

(<http://www.amigaproject.eu/>). These activities include an assessment of the long-term effects of GM crops on economic performance and agricultural output.

Kristine Van Herck described the protocol of conducting a systematic review of the socio-economic impacts of GM cultivation as part of the FP7-funded GRACE project (<http://www.grace-fp7.eu/>). A large number of topics were initially considered for the inclusion in the review. As a result of the stakeholder consultation process, however, impacts on the environment and food security were assigned highest priority. First results of the review can be expected to be published by the end of 2014.

Koen Dillen (DG AGRI) gave a presentation on the methodology of the farm-level impact assessment of GM crop cultivation. He explained a number of methods that are available for ex-post and ex-ante assessments and their respective advantages and disadvantages. Dillen stressed the importance of considering impact heterogeneity instead of looking only at the average impact.

Prof Lynn Frewer discussed research on consumer acceptance of GM crops, including some main results of a recently published meta-analysis she co-authored. Furthermore she presented a number of methods to measure consumer perceptions and attitudes using quantitative and qualitative research methods.

Discussion of General Comments from MS received to the 1st ESEB document

Several topics were presented by the ESEB secretariat and subsequently discussed by the participants. First, an expansion of the introductory section was agreed on, in order to describe in more detail the procedure used for the selection of topics and indicators. Second, in response to members' requests to include more social topics, it was decided to extend the deadline for additional suggestions. Third, a qualification of indicators according to data availability and expected impact will be added to the document by the ESEB secretariat.

Finally, a number of clarifications were made related to the general method of impact assessments, time scales, and scope of GM traits covered. In consequence, it was decided that the document should further clarify the assessment method (i.e. difference between adoption and non-adoption), mention time scales and include other general sectors on which the adoption of GM crops could have impacts (i.e. the pharmaceutical sector which may be relevant in the future).

Discussion of Specific Comments (Farm impacts)

Twelve topics compiled from the specific comments on the farm section were initially put on the table for discussion, and specific actions to proceed decided. A thirteenth topic was brought for discussion during the meeting.

- Merge and move the methods sections from the farm and non-farm parts

- Avoid double counting of indicators under different topics
- Which product quality indicators to include
- Additional indicators related to refuge areas
- Include as an indicator input use per ha
- Indicators for the risk of Adventitious Presence for adopters
- Delete the health effects of pesticide use
- Mirror the indicators of adopters for non-adopters
- Indicators for varietal availability
- Indicators for pest spillovers
- Indicators for competitiveness
- Include indicators for regulatory costs
- Labelling of GM and non-GM products.

Discussion of Specific Comments (non-farm impacts)

Twelve topics compiled from the specific comments on the non-farm section were also put on the table for discussion, and specific actions to proceed decided. The topics included:

- Consider adopters and non-adopters in supply chain separately
- Indicators for innovation capacity
- Biotech start-ups indicator
- Land markets topic
- Comment 174 on "internal market"
- Welfare indicators
- Shelving cost indicator
- Retailers prices indicator
- Consumer impacts through environmental benefits
- Nutritional quality indicators
- Food safety health costs indicator
- Include food security and land grabbing as topics

Update of Work Program

The final point on the agenda was an update of the ESEB work program, taking into account changes in cultivation dossiers in the regulatory system. An agreement was reached to focus on Bt and HT maize and postpone the decision on the next crop-trait combinations to the next meeting.

In addition, the updated work calendar was approved (see the table below). It was decided that the work on a reference document should not overlap with the next one.

Deliverable	I General framework	II Bt maize
Delivery of structure	Jun-13	Dec-14
Consultation phase	July to Nov-13	Dec to Feb-15
Draft Reference Document	Jan-14	May-15
Meeting	Mar-14	Jul-15
Final draft	Jun-14	Oct-15
Final Reference Document	Nov-14	Dec-15

Reporting of related Member States activities

Following a first information exchange during the kick-off meeting on activities by Member States in the area of socio-economic impact analysis on GM crops, participants gave an update of recently published and currently on-going work in this area.

Austria mentioned two commissioned studies that are already published and available, and that no more activities are currently undertaken. France informed about a number of books related to aspects of supply chain (published), farm level (to be published within one month), industry, data availability, coexistence, and ethical and philosophical considerations (all future publications). Hungary repeated that earlier commissioned studies had already been published, and that no more studies are currently ongoing. However, Hungary is organizing regional workshops and conferences with farmers related to the use of GM crops. The Netherlands will update members about potential current activities later on. Slovenia replied that links to relevant publications will be shared with the group. Sweden reported that no new publications are available or planned.

Finally, the JRC informed of an ongoing project on the non-GM soybean market and a recently completed ex-ante impact assessment of the cultivation of HT maize.