

## Cartagena Protocol

Swiss ratification

**Of equal standing to other existing international agreements, the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety takes into consideration the potential environmental impacts from the use of genetically modified organisms.** The Protocol is a new, legal instrument regulating the movement of living modified organisms (the same as genetically modified organisms, GMOs) from one country to another. It defines the importer and exporter obligations for the first transboundary transfer of GMOs. At present, 13 States have ratified the Protocol, which will enter into force 90 days after the 50<sup>th</sup> ratification. The Swiss Federal Parliament (Council of States on 11 December 2001; National Council on 4 March 2002) has accepted the ratification of the Protocol by Switzerland, thus clearing the way to the ratification by the Federal Council. Ratification of the Protocol will not require any changes to the legislation in place.

**Source:**

[http://www.parlament.ch/ab/frameset/d/s/4611/44734/d\\_s\\_4611\\_44734\\_44821.htm](http://www.parlament.ch/ab/frameset/d/s/4611/44734/d_s_4611_44734_44821.htm)

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European Union

**There is a strong political will in EU Member States to ratify the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety.** According to the analysis presented by the EU Commission, the implementation of the Protocol within the EU should be unproblematic and without additional costs other than those already imposed by existing Community legislation. However, a new EU Regulation will be necessary to establish legal clarity and to address horizontal issues, such as the sharing of roles between the EU and its Member States regarding notification obligations. New legislation is also warranted by the need to define exporter obligations, which is not currently covered by existing Community legislation. The proposed EU Regulation will enter into force on the 20<sup>th</sup> day following its publication in the Official Journal of the European Communities and will be applicable from the date of the entry into force of the Protocol or 90 days after the EU ratification, whichever comes first.

**Source:** [http://europa.eu.int/eur-](http://europa.eu.int/eur-lex/en/com/pdf/2002/en_502PC0085.pdf)

[lex/en/com/pdf/2002/en\\_502PC0085.pdf](http://europa.eu.int/eur-lex/en/com/pdf/2002/en_502PC0085.pdf)

Codex  
Alimentarius  
draft texts

Food safety

**At the conclusion of its recent meeting on 4-8 March 2002, the Codex Intergovernmental Task Force on Foods Derived from Biotechnology adopted two draft texts on risk analysis of foods derived from modern biotechnology and safety assessment of recombinant DNA plants.** In addition to the nutritional and toxicological aspects of food components, food safety also requires proper production, processing, storage, handling and preparation conditions. Rather than attempting to identify every potential hazard associated with a particular food from new plant varieties, food safety should be based on a comparative assessment of the novel food relative to its conventional counterpart having a history of safe use. The Codex Alimentarius Commission is a standard-setting body working closely together with other international organizations such as the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the World Health Organization (WHO), for the protection of consumer health.

**Source:** <http://www.codexalimentarius.net/Default.htm>

Transgenic  
cotton

Soil and Bt -  
ecosystem

**In a recently published study, researchers tested soil samples for residual concentration of the Cry1Ac protein in fields where Bt cotton (Bollgard) had been grown for 3-6 consecutive years.** They found the amount of the insecticidal protein in soil, from repeated cultivation of transgenic cotton, to be extremely low and below any detectable biological activity. Earlier reports based on laboratory studies had hypothesized that Bt proteins may accumulate in the soil due to the cultivation of insect-resistant transgenic crop plants. In 2000, transgenic Bt cotton was grown on 1.5 million hectares, which accounts for 3% of the total area planted worldwide (Clive James, 2001).

**Source:** Environmental Ecology (2002) 31: 30-26.

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