



# FAS WORLDWIDE

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## Programs and Opportunities

### APEC Provides Forum To Advance U.S. Priorities in Asia-Pacific Region

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The United States, along with 20 other developed and developing economies on both sides of the Pacific, is a member of APEC (Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation). APEC members — Australia, Brunei, Canada, Chile, China, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Peru, the Philippines, Russia, Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan, Thailand, Vietnam and the United States — are some of the world's most dynamic and fastest growing economies.

Together they account for about 40 percent of world population, almost 50 percent of world trade, nearly 60 percent of global gross domestic product and, by some measures, nearly 70 percent of world economic growth in recent years. Fellow APEC members buy two-thirds of all U.S. exports and supply the United States with two-thirds of its imports. The APEC economies buy three-quarters of U.S. agricultural exports, making them important customers for U.S. farmers, ranchers, processors and exporters.

Through APEC, the United States and other member economies work to facilitate and promote free trade, economic growth, investment and cooperation in the Pacific region. APEC is a venue for open dialogue on a variety of issues affecting economic development and trade.

Since its formation in 1989, APEC has grown into an international organization with four committees, several working groups and numerous special task groups. The United States is active in all these fora and works through consensus building and advocacy to advance its interests.

#### USDA's Priorities in APEC

USDA has identified and pursued several issues as priorities for discussion in APEC in 2005. They include agricultural biotechnology, international standards for animal and plant health and the WTO (World Trade Organization) Doha Development Agenda.

- Through APEC, the United States can discuss agricultural biotechnology with other member economies. These discussions focus on promoting regulatory frameworks based on sound science, recognizing intellectual property rights and providing accurate information on this technology to the public.
- APEC economies are interested in agricultural biotechnology as a tool to address food security needs, increase agricultural productivity and reduce pesticide use.



#### Cartagena Biosafety Protocol

The Cartagena Biosafety Protocol is a supplementary multilateral environmental agreement adopted by parties to the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity in 2000. It entered into force in 2003. The protocol's aim is to protect and sustain biodiversity by ensuring the safe transfer, handling and use of LMOs (living modified organisms), such as seeds for planting. It impacts all countries that buy and sell agricultural commodities because specific documentation is required before LMOs can be shipped.

- Through bilateral meetings, APEC gives the United States the opportunity to reinforce the importance of adopting and implementing international standards for animal and plant health at the multilateral level.
- APEC provides a constructive forum to address and build support for many agricultural issues being raised in the WTO.

These priorities complement broader U.S. government objectives and fall under the purview of APEC working groups and special task forces.

Among these groups are the ATCWG (Agricultural Technical Cooperation Working Group), chaired by South Korea; the Health Task Force, chaired by the United States; and the HLPDAB (High-Level Policy Dialogue on Agricultural Biotechnology), also chaired by the United States.

### Technical Cooperation Helps Economies Grow

The aim of the ATCWG is to advance the economic development and social welfare of member economies by improving agricultural cooperation and helping them build the capacity to trade. At the June 2005 annual ATCWG meeting, representatives of member economies agreed to a series of new capacity-building initiatives to help farmers in developing countries protect plants and livestock from major pests and diseases.

The ATCWG has several sub-groups. USDA agencies are involved in the following three:

- **Production, Processing, Marketing, Distribution and Consumption of Agricultural Products Sub-Group.** FAS co-chairs this sub-group with Japan. One of its accomplishments is helping to implement a cold chain improvement initiative and establish a Web site of data sources on food supply and demand.
- **Plant and Animal Quarantine and Pest Management Sub-Group.** USDA's APHIS (Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service) co-chairs this sub-group with Australia. This fall, APHIS is organizing a workshop in Fort Collins, CO, on international standards for plant and animal health. The workshop will help member economies align their plant and animal quarantine and pest management programs with international standards.
- **Research, Development and Extension of Agricultural Biotechnology Sub-Group.** APHIS represents USDA in this sub-group, which discusses technical advances in agricultural biotechnology.

### Health Task Force Addresses Emerging Diseases

After the emergence of SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome) in 2003, APEC members saw the need for a mechanism to more efficiently and effectively address health-related threats from emerging infectious diseases. As a result, this ad-hoc task force was established in 2003 with a two-year mandate.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services chairs this task force, which is an ideal venue to promote international standards for animal and plant health.

In July, USDA sponsored an APEC symposium on the "Response to Outbreaks of Avian Influenza and Preparedness for a Human Health Emergency" in San Francisco, CA. The symposium had several goals:

- explore the important multi-sector (agricultural, human health, financial, foreign affairs and trade) aspects and impacts of AI (avian influenza) in the APEC region;
- identify requirements and resource needs to address AI;
- share information about the work of international standard-setting bodies and international organizations to establish more uniform regulations and policies across borders;
- provide a forum for exploring policies that could contribute to solutions; and

**Bioinformatics** is the use of information technology, such as computers and databases, to manage and analyze large amounts of biological data, resulting in new insights.

- encourage APEC economies to identify factors that make it difficult to achieve goals for controlling animal and human diseases.

More than 120 participants attended the symposium, including government and private sector officials representing the agricultural, human health, financial, foreign affairs and trade sectors. Participants represented APEC member economies, as well as Cambodia, Laos and relevant international organizations.

The symposium resulted in a recommendation statement that will be presented to the APEC Health Task Force for endorsement on how to build the capacity and develop the resources to deal with AI, participate in international organizations and develop, use and adhere to internationally recognized science-based standards.

### Dialogue on Biotechnology in Fifth Year

The HLPDAB was established in 2001 to exchange information and share experiences on the development, regulation and commercialization of agricultural biotechnology. The group is chaired by the United States.

USDA, in coordination with the U.S. Department of State and the U.S. Trade Representative's Office, has been successful in encouraging the HLPDAB to address common challenges and concerns faced by countries seeking to realize the benefits of agricultural biotechnology. The group has addressed developing regulatory frameworks, facilitating technology transfer, encouraging investment and strengthening consumer confidence.

Since its inception, the HLPDAB has held four meetings, the most recent in Seoul, South Korea, in March. More than 70 delegates and speakers from international organizations and 17 APEC economies attended this meeting, which produced several positive outcomes.

- A session was held on the CPB (Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety) to

help raise awareness of the costs associated with its implementation. The information was useful to the member economies as they prepared for the second meeting of the parties to the CPB in May. At that meeting, international guidelines for living modified organisms were discussed. Another outcome of the session was agreement to hold a workshop early next year to help countries develop effective biosafety frameworks.

- Sessions on intellectual property rights, technology transfer and bioinformatics demonstrated the need for countries to create the economic, political and social environment where sound regulations, public-private partnerships and collaborative research can prosper.

The HLPDAB will continue to help economies attract and increase investment in agricultural biotechnology.

The HLPDAB has also focused on helping farmers recognize the benefits of agricultural biotechnology. Farmer-to-farmer workshops were developed to provide farmers and community leaders with the tools and training to become strong advocates of the technology. Three farmer-to-farmer workshops have been held in the Pacific region since 2003.

- The first workshop in the Philippines for farmers from Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam resulted in the formation of ASFARNET (Asian Farmers Regional Network). This network will exchange experiences and knowledge related to agricultural biotechnology, promote responsible farming, accelerate the transfer of appropriate modern technology and increase community awareness and involvement in its activities.
- A second workshop in Honduras informed Central American farmers about how agricultural biotechnology might help them increase productivity and reduce pesticide use.
- Farmers who met in Indonesia at the third workshop signed a detailed declaration approving the use of transgenic seeds on farms, encouraging the Indonesian government to approve transgenic seeds, establishing an Indonesian arm of ASFARNET and supporting the development of agricultural biotechnology by working with research institutions, industry, nongovernmental organizations and government institutions.

The HLPDAB has also examined ways in which investment in agricultural biotechnology can be promoted and fostered. At a seminar attended by government officials and private sector representatives in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, in 2004, attendees examined the policy and economic factors that impact the

environment for investments in agricultural biotechnology. Participants identified priorities, goals and ways to successfully invest in agricultural biotechnology, including establishing an efficient and predictable regulatory environment and developing intellectual property systems to protect inventions and encourage technology transfer.

Building on the success of this seminar, the HLPDAB is developing a "tool box" of information materials, including examples of successful efforts by member economies to foster the growth of investment in biotechnology. This tool box, which will serve as a resource for economies seeking to create an attractive business and regulatory climate for biotechnology companies, will be presented at next spring's HLPDAB meeting.

Over the last decade and a half, APEC has been an important venue for discussing a wide range of issues vital to U.S. agriculture. As USDA continues to coordinate its efforts in APEC, this forum will provide an effective means to build and strengthen partnerships with other member economies.

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