



“Working Together to Make Trade Work”

NAEGA MAP Trip Report – ISF Mid-Year Meetings – Bordeaux, France

Name of Traveler: Marcel Bruins, Science Advisor, NAEGA/IGTC

Dates of Travel: October 16-17, 2016

Purpose of Travel:

Consistent with NAEGA UES objectives, Marcel Bruins, Science Advisor for NAEGA and the International Grain Trade Coalition (IGTC), traveled to Bordeaux, France on October 16-17, 2016 to participate in the International Seed Federation’s Mid-Year meetings.

The IGTC seeks to provide for plant breeding innovations (PBI) in a least trade distortive manner in support of GRNOS trade. Over the past year the International Grain Trade Coalition (IGTC) has been considering policy and information sharing plans with the ISF related to newPBI.). During these discussions, including at meetings in London in June, the IGTC has worked closely with the ISF to find common ground and develop common communications plans toward securing international regulatory coherence and compatibility on PBIs. Mr. Bruins attendance at the mid-year meetings of the ISF continued IGTC’s relationship with the ISF and increased IGTC knowledge and understanding of different plant breeding techniques.

Summary of Findings

The International Grain Trade Coalition (IGTC) was invited to attend the second day only of the ISF mid-year meetings. During the second day of the meetings, the ISF discussed three policy papers that have been developed over the past few months finalized at the previous day’s meetings. These papers dealt with the topic of plant breeding invocation (PBI), including: a concept paper on “Consistent Criteria for the Scope of Regulatory Oversight”; a talking points paper on Plant Breeding Innovation; and an Industry Issue paper on Synthetic Biology. In addition, the ISF considered advocacy and communication plans related to these papers.

ISF Concept Paper on Regulatory Oversight

With this paper the ISF wishes to foster agreement among countries on the criteria that would be used to determine the scope of regulatory oversight. The proposed criteria are the following:

When considering the criteria for the scope of regulatory oversight, the question is not whether there is adequate regulation of foods and plants but rather the extent to which a specific pre-market review and clearance process is justified for plant varieties developed using certain plant breeding methods.

An underlying principle for determining these consistent criteria is: Plant varieties developed through the latest breeding methods should not be differentially regulated if they are similar or indistinguishable from varieties that could have been produced through earlier breeding methods.



“Working Together to Make Trade Work”

Therefore, the international seed industry proposes the following:

The genetic variation in the final plant product would not be covered under the scope of existing biotech/GMO regulations for plants if:

- a) there is no novel combination of genetic material, or*
- b) the final plant product solely contains the stable insertion of inherited genetic material from sexually compatible plant species, or*
- c) the genetic variation is the result of mutagenesis – spontaneous, induced or targeted.*

The ISF realizes that countries have differing biotech regulations, some product based, some process based, and some a mixture of both. Therefore, the concept paper also states that once countries agree on the criteria, they may need to implement them differently, given the differences in current regulations around the world. The paper also recognizes that some countries will need to interpret definitions and other countries may need to redefine regulatory triggers. The main objective of the ISF paper is: “to achieve alignment among governments on the criteria used to assess whether plants developed through plant breeding innovations should be subject to regulatory oversight under existing GMO regulations for plants.” The ISF proscribed goal of seeking for alignment among countries is very close to the IGTC policy position, which also seeks international alignment. More specifically, the IGTC policy paper under point 4 states the following:

International alignment of regulatory policy on new plant breeding tools is an immediate need that includes:

- a) Consistent policy outcomes across jurisdictions;*
- b) Legal certainty as a goal;*
- c) Plant varieties developed through the latest breeding methods should not be differentially regulated if they are similar or indistinguishable from varieties that could have been produced through traditional practices.*

It seems that the recent correspondence between ISF and IGTC has resulted in a convergence of the two positions. There are still several differences, but the approach is similar.

During the meeting, IGTC managed to introduce some wording on the importance of alignment in regulation for the commodity sector and the overall food security.

A draft copy of the concept paper has already been presented to government representatives of Australia, and there was a lot of interest in the paper. As a result of this outreach, the Australian government has issued a [paper on gene-technology](#), and has started a round of consultation. Croplife Australia and the Australian Seed Federation (ASF) are gathering input for a response.

ISF wishes to finalize this concept paper as soon as possible ahead of several important events coming up over the coming year. The ISF would like to distribute the concept paper at the following events:

1. Meeting between China and Korea in early beginning of November. The ISF plans to translate their paper for this meeting;



“Working Together to Make Trade Work”

2. Congress of the Seed Association of the Americas (SAA) in 2017;
3. WTO Ministerial in Argentina in December 2017;
4. G20 on July 7 and 8, 2017, in Hamburg, Germany;
5. High Level Policy Dialogue on Agricultural Biotechnology (HLPDAB) in Vietnam;

According to the ISF, the OECD-ENV department has also allocated resources to tackle this subject at OECD level.

Meeting participants also discussed a draft paper on synthetic biology. ISF is instructing its members to reach out to governments and ask them to avoid any initiative which could end up with changes to risk assessment methodologies on synthetic biology. It is the aim to get this paper out before the upcoming Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety COP-MOP meeting in Cancun, Mexico in December 2016.

Core Countries

The discussion moved to consider ISF focus countries. The ISF will continue to concentrate on the countries that were in London for their annual meetings, including Argentina, Japan, Germany, the United Kingdom, the United States, South Africa, France and Brazil. Furthermore, ISF is seeking to add China, Korea, Canada and possibly Vietnam (as Vietnam will take on the Presidency of APEC next year).

ISF confirmed its intentions to go ahead and organize a third meeting of the countries, but this meeting will take a different format (no longer under Chatham House Rules). Potentially, it will become a one or two day meeting on genome editing. Once ISF has feedback from the core countries, it will report back to the IGTC.

Perspective and Positions from Partners

Under this agenda topic IGTC was invited to share their latest developments. Dr. Bruins re-iterated again that for IGTC the most crucial matter is that there is international alignment of regulatory policy on new plant breeding innovations. With ISF’s efforts to come to consistent criteria, the targets of both organizations seem to be approaching each other. There has been a good exchange of view over the past 6 months, with reciprocal adaptations in the positions of both ISF and IGTC.

Dr. Bruins, speaking for the IGTC, also encouraged ISF once again to form a broader coalition of organizations that have a stake in this debate. Dr. Bruins suggested that efforts like the e-phyto initiative, where multi-sector organizations were brought together, would be the ideal way to move forward. ISF appreciated the suggestion, and would investigate how to bring in more organizations.

Communication’s Efforts

ISF is currently in the process of re-vitalizing all of its communication efforts, including social media. It has plans to develop a resource bank with infographics, videos, pictures and presentations for their members to use on certain topics. ISF is also soliciting feedback on the Talking Points document on PBI. IGTC has requested that once ISF has finalized and approved their three



“Working Together to Make Trade Work”

documents, that these be shared with IGTC for further sharing within IGTC membership. At that time, ISF and IGTC should organize another teleconference for discussion and planning.

Recommendations

IGTC’s efforts of communication and coordination with the ISF have, so far been successful. The ISF appears to be welcoming to the IGTC’s message on the regulation of PBIs. As the ISF moves forward with finalizing and distributing its concept paper at international forums in the coming year, the IGTC should remain engaged and continue to promote, at the ISF and elsewhere, the IGTC policy objective of encouraging alignment and coordination of global and national regulatory measures for PBIs. Continued cooperation between the ISF and the IGTC and its policy teams is vital to promote IGTC policy files in this regard.

Participants:

Bernice Slutsky (ASTA, chair); Niels Louwaars (Dutch Seed Association PLANTUM); Atsushi Izumida (Sakata Seed company, Japan); Lomo Janse van Rensburg (Managing Director of Klein Karoo seed company, South Africa); Olivier Lucas (head of scientific affairs of RAGT seed company, France); Naomi Stevens (Global Head Market Acceptance, BioScience at Bayer CropScience, Germany –representing CropLife); Michael Leader (Regional Seed Movement Lead Asia Pacific & China for Monsanto Australia); Markus Gierth (Head of Dept., Responsible for plant innovation at German Plant Breeders Association BDP); Heidi Gallant (Guest – Executive Director of the Asia Pacific Seed Association APSA); Eric Deron (Guest from French Seed Association UFS); Lynelle van Emmenes (Guest - Biotechnology Regulatory compliance manager at Syngenta South Africa); Jennifer Clowes (Communication Manager ISF); Marcel Bruins (IGTC, Guest)

Attachments

- Agenda – ISF Mid-year Meeting