REPUBLIC OF ALBANIA

MINISTRY OF TOURISM & ENVIRONMENT

Joint Aarhus Convention & Convention on Biological Diversity

Side event on Public Awareness, Access to Information and Public Participation regarding LMOs/GMOs

Ministry of Tourism & Environment
October 2024

I. Country Profile

NO authorizations have been given for the release on the market of foods and food ingredients that contain or consist of GMO, in the Republic of Albania.

II. Albania GMOs legislation and its approximation with international legislation

Albania has ratified Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety to the Convention on Biological Diversity in 2004;

Albania has ratified Supplementary Protocol on Liability and redress to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety, on March 2013

Albania accepted the amendment on genetically modified organisms (GMO amendment) to the Aarhus Convention, on 3 September 2020

Albanian Legislation

The Albanian legislation about GMO products remains yet very limited, consisting mainly of ratified international conventions and protocols and limited number national laws referring briefly and generally to GMOs products in various articles. The main laws that are currently regulating GMO products are:

Agriculture

Law on Food Law 9863/2008;

Law on the production, processing, certification and marketing of “bio products”;

Environment

Law on protection of environmental

Law on environmental impact assessment”

Other policy making stakeholders are:

-Ministry of Health for microorganisms with an impact on human health

- Ministry of Education and Sports for biotechnology development;

-The General Directorate of Customs responsible for the implementation of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety regarding trans-boundary movements of GMOs;

Legislative amendments

- **Law no. 84/2020, On approval of Decision II/1 of the parties, amending "Aarhus Convention" ratification law no. 8672, of 26.10.2000.**
- *Added, Annex 1/1, after Annex 1.*
- In this Annex, under Modalities as referred to Article 6/1, 8 detailed points are added to ensure that public participation obligations are met regarding decisions on voluntary release into the environment placing genetically modified organisms on the market.

Chapter X "Food labeling and publication"

Article 36 General food labeling requirements

The food, which is put on the market, is provided with the label, which states:

the content or composition of GMOs, as well as the GMOs it contains.

The label must be written in the Albanian language, be distinct, legible and understandable.

Article 37 "Presentation and advertising of food"

The presentation of food and feed includes their form, appearance or packaging, packaging materials used, the manner in which they are arranged and the environment in which they are presented, as well as relevant information about it by any means information.

Advertising of food or animal feed is done only after the institution responsible for the official control of food and animal feed grants the right to their production and marketing.

- Draft DCM on the deliberate release of the LMOs into the environment …, completed in 2015
- Stakeholders consultation organized in November 2015
- Strong reaction on the GMOs issue
- DCM approval postponed several times
- Planned for the future

Project

- **First project**: GEF/UNEP project Development of National Bio-safety Framework for Albania with total cost of 185 600 USD of which 123 500 USD financed by GEF Trust fund and 62,000 USD is co-financed by Albanian Government contribution (2005-2006) implemented by MoE
- **Second project**: “Building capacity for effective participation in the Biosafety Clearing House (May 2006 - October 2007)

- **Data Sources [I]**
- Interim, First National & Second Reports **http://bch.cbd.int/protocol/cpb_natreports.shtml**
- Use Report Analyzer http://**bch.cbd.int/protocol/cpb_natreports.shtml**
- National Biosafety Frameworks **(www.unep.org/biosafety)**
- National Data on the BCH, NBSAPs, National Biodiversity Reports (4 National Reports) and national websites
- Institutional Data & publications

ALBANIA - BCH II project contributed to:

- Drafting of the biosafety policy,
- Elaboration of the regulatory regime,
- Completion and pilot testing of the administrative system
- Put in place systems for monitoring and enforcement
- **Raising public awareness of biosafety**
- **Improving public participation in biosafety decision-making**

Continue… Project for Sustainable Capacity Building for Effective Participation in the Biosafety Clearing House (BCH phase III);

Goal is: "to provide support to eligible parties to build and sustain individual and institutional capacities for effective participation in the BCH in line with COP/MOP Decisions, specifically BS VI/5 para 2f ".

MAIN PROJECT ACTIVITY: NATIONAL WORKSHOPS

- Training and Education materials including webinars
- Support to integrate national and regional networks of collaboration
- Virtual Learning Platform (VLE) hosted on UNEP servers since June 2020: https://bch3-vle.unep.org

During the workshop were introduced the following topics: BCH project generalities, framework, Cartagena Protocol & BCH review, finding and registering information on the BCH, which were largely discussed in the context of data gathering and entering into the BCH portal for Albania.

Output 1: A stocktaking assessment which analyses the current status of biotechnology and biosafety in Albania, strengths and weaknesses in existing capacities.

Output 2: Biosafety policy is up to date with current national developments

Output 3: A full regulatory regime for biosafety is designed and approved

Output 4: Establishment of a body responsible for Biosafety
Bio-safety issues are cross-cutting and in this context the commitment required from all governmental INSTITUTIONS to contribute in this process is crucial.

MTE is the leader of this field but other institutions that are of same importance in this area are Ministry of Agriculture & Rural Development and the National Food Authority (NFA).

V. Future Steps

- Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA III) Programming Framework for the period 2021-2027, support is provided to draft the Law "On Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs)".
- Full transposition of GMOs regulations is expected to be done within 2027, while implementation will require a longer time after adoption of the new law.
- Albania will evaluate the existing system and if necessary adapt it according to the needs for the implementation of the new law.
- IPA II "The Food Safety Project" implemented in January 2020
  - Assisting MoARD in the assessment and identification of potential issues regarding implementation of GMO legislation in Albania.
  - Assisting MoARD staff at policy level tasked with drafting national legislation on GMOs for Albania; etc.
  - Translate and enforced the Guidelines on access to information, public participation and access to justice with respect to genetically modified organisms;

Rising awareness of the stakeholders (Ministry of Agriculture and Ministry of Health) for this recent development in the GMO-s information and public participation;

UT Partners, scientific research (FNS) and ITU (Dept. Biotechnology) are important stakeholders.

MTE based on a defined vision as in the National Plan for the Implementation of the Stabilization and Association Agreement for the long term has projected the draft Decision on issues concerning the deliberate release into the environment of LMOs.

Thank you for your attention!