



# Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

## Meeting Report

### Side event to the 38<sup>th</sup> Session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission FAO GM Foods Platform: recent progress and future directions

6 July 2015, Geneva, Switzerland, 13.10 – 14.30 hours  
Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)



#### Abstract

On 6 July 2015, a side event to the 38<sup>th</sup> Session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC) entitled “FAO GM Foods Platform: recent progress and future directions” was organized at the Centre International de Conférences Geneva, Switzerland. A total of 113 delegates from 49 countries attended the event. This side event provided an opportunity to understand the challenges that Member countries are facing in conducting safety assessment of GM foods. In order to respond to the Codex Members’ needs, FAO would consider providing opportunities for countries to exchange information on emerging issues relevant to the safety assessment of GM foods. As many participants suggested, it is important to strengthen and maintain the fully-populated, value-added and interactive Platform. This calls upon FAO to continue its effort in maintaining and enhancing the Platform and its community.

#### Keywords

genetically modified foods; food safety; risk assessment; biosafety regulations; access to information; FAO GM Foods Platform; FAO; Codex Alimentarius Commission

## Welcome remarks

Ms Masami Takeuchi (Food Safety Officer & FAO GM Foods Platform Manager, FAO)

The meeting was opened by Ms Masami Takeuchi. She stated that FAO works to assist its Member in provision of scientific advice and capacity development to make evidence-based risk management decisions. FAO also provides technical advice for the establishment of appropriate regulatory frameworks in the fields of biosafety and food safety. She introduced FAO's publication "GM Food Safety Assessment: Tools for trainers"<sup>1</sup> that was developed in 2008 for the purpose of facilitating training activities on the safety assessment of GM foods.

Ms Takeuchi informed the participants that as of 30 June 2015, the Platform has 165 Members actively participating, out of all 186 Codex Members. Ms Takeuchi said that this side event would be a good opportunity for the participants to discuss the future direction of the Platform in order to further improve the quality of the Platform as well as to strengthen the community network among the Codex Members. She concluded with her wish that this meeting would be fruitful for all the participants.

Following her welcome remarks, Ms Takeuchi introduced Mr Hiroshi Yoshikura, the former chair of the Ad Hoc Intergovernmental Task Force on Food Derived from Biotechnology (TFFBT), to the participants.

## The history of the Codex the Ad Hoc Intergovernmental Task Force on Food Derived from Biotechnology (TFFBT) and its related guidelines

Mr Hiroshi Yoshikura (the former chair of the TFFBT)

Mr Yoshikura briefly introduced the participants about the TFFBT and the Scope of Annex III of the Codex "*Guideline for the conduct of food safety assessment of foods derived from recombinant-DNA plants (CAC/GL 45-2003)*"<sup>2</sup> which was one of the key outputs of the TFFBT.

He stressed that the Platform is only useful when up-to-date and high quality data is shared. On this point, it is important for all Codex Members to be active in the Platform community to share data/information on GM food safety assessment.



## Presentation: FAO GM Foods Platform: recent progress and future directions

Ms Masami Takeuchi (Food Safety Officer & FAO GM Foods Platform Manager, FAO)

Ms Masami Takeuchi began her presentation by explaining the structure of the FAO GM Foods Platform. The FAO GM Foods Platform is an online platform to be freely accessed by visitors. Only Focal Points, who are officially nominated by the Member governments, can upload data/information to the Platform.

<sup>1</sup> Available on the website of the FAO GM Foods Platform at:

<http://www.fao.org/docrep/012/i0110e/i0110e00.htm>

<sup>2</sup> Available on the website of the Codex Alimentarius at:

[http://www.codexalimentarius.org/download/standards/10021/CXG\\_045e.pdf](http://www.codexalimentarius.org/download/standards/10021/CXG_045e.pdf)



She explained the Platform's benefits to the Members. On an individual level, the benefits include: 1) access to the latest information regarding GM food safety assessment; 2) access to resources in conducting risk management of GM plants; 3) usefulness as a tool for an emergency response in cases of Low Level Presence (LLP) of GM materials to look up references and GM food safety assessment results produced by other countries; 4) references in locating exact contact points of trade-partners in case there is a query on certain traded commodity and relevant GM food safety assessment information; and 5) opportunity to become an active member of a global community of biosafety.

From the global perspective, the Platform achieves its goals in 1) protecting consumers by playing the role of a global, independent, neutral and transparent source of information on GM food safety assessment; 2) providing science-based resources and information for securing food safety; 3) addressing the global needs expressed by Codex Alimentarius in providing the information exchange forum for LLP situations; 4) avoiding trade disruption caused by divergence in GM food safety assessment regulations; and 5) facilitating a global "Community of Practice" for possible capacity development in the area of biosafety. Using a hypothetical case study, Ms Takeuchi also conducted a demonstration on how one can find specific information.

Regarding the current status of all the Codex Members in the Platform activities, Ms Takeuchi explained that as of 30 June 2015, 165 (out of 186) Members have nominated their Focal Points, 109 Members have completed their country profile pages, 28 Members have created mutual links between the Platform and their national webpages and the Platform hosts 752 records by 16 actively participating countries. In conclusion, she emphasized the importance of active participation from all the Codex Members in the Platform activities, and suggested participants to contact FAO for assistance in fully utilizing the Platform. The presentation is available at <http://tiny.cc/cac38gmplatform>.

### **Presentation: Philippine Regulations and Food Safety Assessment – The Philippines**

Ms Amparo C. Ampil (Representative of the Codex Contact Point for the Philippines)

Ms Amparo C. Ampil from the Philippines first explained the national institutional frameworks on biosafety. In the Philippines, the safety of primary foods is ensured by the Department of Agriculture. The safety assessment of GM food is the responsibility of three different bureaus: Bureau of Plant Industry, Bureau of Agriculture and Fisheries Standards and the Bureau of Animal Industry. She explained that risk assessment of GM foods in the country follows the Codex "*Guideline for the conduct of food safety assessment of foods derived from recombinant-DNA plants (CAC/GL 45-2003)*"<sup>2</sup>.



Ms Ampil discussed the Philippines's participation level to the Platform. The Philippines joined the Platform in 2013 with the 2 Focal Points and they have already completed its country profile, shared 69 records and created mutual links. In particular, Ms Ampil pointed out the value of the Platform for the Philippines. The Platform provides access to relevant data for updates on risk assessment parameters and for references to other countries' risk assessment results. In case of technical issues/data gaps in risk assessment, the Platform can also be a great resource. Then, she stated that they use the Platform also for monitoring of approvals from other countries to aid their decision making process. Finally, she suggested that FAO organizes webinars on relevant topics as appropriate to keep the Platform community informed on the issues related to GM food risk assessment. The presentation is available at <http://tiny.cc/cac38philippines>.

#### **Presentation: FAO GM Foods Platform Case Study: Canada – Canada**

Ms Rebeka Tekle (Senior Trade Policy Analyst, Trade Agreements and Negotiations Directorate in Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada)

Ms Rebeka Tekle from Canada stated that in her country, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency and Health Canada are jointly responsible for ensuring the safety of GM foods. Health Canada's risk assessments for GM foods are based on the relevant Codex guidelines.



Ms Tekle explained that Canada has been an active member of the Platform community since 2013 with 2 designated Focal Points; similar to the Philippines. Canada has completed its country profile, shared 89 records and created mutual links. She highlighted that the internationally maintained FAO GM Foods Platform increases transparency, allowing countries to place their regulatory decisions and their scientific basis online. She also stated that for countries facing an LLP situation, the Platform serves as a great resource to review safety assessments conducted by other countries event. She concluded her presentation by reiterating that the Platform is a useful tool to facilitate international trade as it provides valuable intelligence about GM foods approved in other countries and safety assessments performed. The presentation is available at <http://tiny.cc/cac38canada>.

#### **Discussions**

The discussion session was facilitated by Ms Takeuchi. The first discussion topic was on the difficulties/challenges in actively participating in the Platform. It was flagged by some participants that the lack of policy makers' awareness on the importance of the topic is making it difficult to establish a legal framework that connects GM food safety assessment. In addition, the inter-agency/governmental collaboration to learn know-how in conducting GM food safety assessment was found to be highly important.

The second topic was on the inter-agency/governmental collaboration. The participants agreed that collaboration at the national level as well as regional and global levels is important in order to involve all Codex members in the Platform community activities and strengthen the community network. Furthermore, it was suggested that FAO provides fora

for Codex Members to facilitate dialogue and exchange of information on emerging issues relevant to the food safety aspects of novel technologies including GM food risk assessment. This could be addressed through series of webinars or physical meetings.

During the discussion session, 3 panelists shared their experiences and related framework for their inter-agency/governmental collaborations. Some difficulties/challenges at the national level were also highlighted.

## **Sudan**

Ms Ula Abdelaziz Makkawi

(Senior Quality Control inspector / Food safety department, Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Sudan)

Ms Makkawi first shared the challenges and capacity development needs in conducting safety assessment of GM foods. During the regional event held in May 2015, the Near East countries discussed such challenges and one of the biggest challenges was identified to be the lack of policy makers' awareness on the importance of the topic, making it difficult to establish a sound and feasible framework to conduct GM food safety assessment. This also results in having difficulty developing inter-sectoral or inter-agency collaboration which is essential to deal with the topic of biosafety which is multidisciplinary. For this purpose, Ms Makkawi emphasized the needs in the international network communication for sharing information and authorized websites. She also shared the good practices of the inter-agency collaboration by using the international platform including FAO GM Foods Platform and Biosafety Cleaning House (BCH). Regional collaboration (i.e. staff exchange for technical working in the biosafety field) was a powerful tool for raising the awareness of the delegates. See Annex 2 to view written summary provided by Sudan prior to the side event.



## **Australia**

Mr Steve McCutcheon

(Chief Executive Officer, Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ), Australia)



Mr McCutcheon shared FSANZ's experience in hosting study visits from Kenya, Bhutan, Japan, Ghana, Republic of Korea, China and India to explain how GM food safety assessments are conducted in Australia. He also outlined a more recent initiative where FSANZ is collaborating with Health Canada to develop a joint review system for safety assessment of GM foods. During the process, a high level of commonality between the two agencies has been identified in terms of their approach to GM food safety assessment which, in part, reflects the strong history of collaboration between the two agencies over many years. In addition to collaboration with specific country agencies, FSANZ, as a representative of the Australian Government, is invited from time to time to attend workshops/symposia and give presentations on aspects of GM food regulation and GM food

safety assessments. These fora provide a good opportunity for exchange of information and discussion on the regulation of GM foods outside the formal agenda. See Annex 3 to view written summary provided by Australia prior to the side event.

### **Mexico**

Ms Pamela Suárez Brito

(Manager of International Affairs in Food Safety / International Affairs on Food Safety, Mexico)

Ms Suárez shared the experience in Mexico on their inter-governmental collaboration on GM food safety assessment. Mexico is part of various international biosafety-related bodies. Mexico shares information on GM food safety assessment among parties and members of such bodies on a regular basis. Although there is not a particular line with specific countries, information flows continuously when needed (formal and informal communication). See Annex 4 to view written summary provided by Mexico prior to the side event.



In addition to three panelists, 2 case study presenters also shared the country experiences and the suggestions.

### **Canada**

Ms Rebeka Tekle (Senior Trade Policy Analyst, Trade Agreements and Negotiations Directorate in Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada)

Ms Tekle explained Canada's experience in strengthening inter-agency collaboration. As Canada does not have a central government system for the approval of products of biotechnology, it works to coordinate approvals of food, feed and environment simultaneously, avoiding asynchronous approval on the same GM event. The food, feed and environmental decision making processes remain independent but are coordinated informally across the relevant departments.

### **The Philippines**

Ms Amparo C. Ampil (Representative of the Codex Contact Point for the Philippines)

The Philippines suggested that FAO organize technical webinars as appropriate to keep the Platform community informed on the issues related to GM food risk assessment.

### **Questions & Answers**

**Q1:** Who is responsible for updating the information on safety assessment of foods to the Platform?

**A1:** Focal Points are responsible. The Platform Focal Points have been officially nominated by the Codex Contact Points, and they are responsible for accuracy of the information/records they share on the Platform. FAO checks the administrative format of the submitted data.

**Q2:** What kind of assessment and activities could be carried out at FAO regarding the perceptions issues around GM foods?

**A2:** FAO would like to address whatever needs raised by the national delegates. An official request would be the starting point to conduct any activities from FAO's side. FAO has recently developed a handbook on food safety risk communication. This resource-rich handbook would be useful on this topic too. The handbook will be published in late 2015.

**Q3:** If a GM plant has more than one modifications (stacked events), how the regulations over required safety assessment should be set?

**A3:** Various regulatory approaches exist to manage stacked events at national level. Mr McCutcheon (Australia) informed the floor that the FSANZ does not separately assess safety of GM food with stacked event as each individual GM event's safety has already been assessed and approved. In other countries such as Japan and EU, stacked events are recognized as a new GM event, thus a separate food safety assessment is required. Since this is a regulatory matter, FAO is not in the position to advice on this matter. On the Platform, there is a room for stack events to be separately listed to accommodate the needs from the countries that assess stacked events separately.

In addition to the above questions, one participant commented that there is an immediate need for capacity development on food safety assessment of GM foods in many developing countries. In general, both human and financial resources are limited but more importantly, there is a strong need for the policy-makers and the general public to understand the importance of effective and science-based management of biosafety issues. There are many experienced countries that can provide practical knowledge as well as lessons-learned to those who need them. FAO can play a role in facilitating such communication and collaboration among countries, making sure that the knowledge-transfer would be done in a balanced and transparent way.

### **Conclusion and a way forward**

Ms Takeuchi concluded that this side event provided opportunity for FAO to understand the challenges that Member countries are facing in conducting safety assessment of GM foods. Ms Takeuchi also stated that in order to respond to the Codex Members' needs, FAO would consider providing opportunities for countries to exchange information on emerging issues relevant to the safety assessment of GM foods. As many participants suggested, it is important to strengthen and maintain the fully-populated, value-added and interactive Platform. This calls upon FAO to continue its effort in maintaining and enhancing the Platform and its community. She thanked all the speakers, panellists and participants for their inputs and insightful comments.

### **Distributed materials**

Prior to the meeting, the participants were provided with the following documents.

- CAC/38 INF/9 "FAO GM Foods Platform" available at [ftp://ftp.fao.org/codex/meetings/cac/cac38/if38\\_09e.pdf](ftp://ftp.fao.org/codex/meetings/cac/cac38/if38_09e.pdf)

- Guideline for the conduct of food safety assessment of foods derived from recombinant-DNA plants (CAC/GL 45-2003), available at [http://www.codexalimentarius.org/download/standards/10021/CXG\\_045e.pdf](http://www.codexalimentarius.org/download/standards/10021/CXG_045e.pdf)
- A brief by the Chair of the Codex ad hoc intergovernmental task force on food derived from biotechnology (TFFBT), available at <http://tiny.cc/cac38tffbt>
- Summary tables of the participation status of Codex Members to the FAO GM Foods Platform, available at <http://tiny.cc/cac38platformstatus>
- FAO GM Food Safety Assessment Tools for Trainers, available at <http://www.fao.org/docrep/012/i0110e/i0110e00.htm>

A summary report of the event (the present document), all the presentation files and panelists' speaking points are available at <http://fao.org/gm-platform/> under the "Resources" page.

## Acronyms

AOECS	Association of European Coeliac Societies
BCH	Biosafety Clearing House
CAC	Codex Alimentarius Commission
EUVEPRO	European Vegetable Protein Federation
ELC	Federation of European Specialty Food Ingredients Industries
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FDA	Food and Drug Administration
FSANZ	Food Standards Australia New Zealand
GM	Genetically Modified
IGAD	Intergovernmental Authority on Development
ICPALD	IGAD Center for Pastoral Areas & Livestock Development
ICRI	International Consortium for Refugees in Iran
IFPRI	International Food Policy Research Institute
ISDI	International Special Dietary Foods Industries
LLP	Low Level Presence
OECD	The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
TFFBT	Ad Hoc Intergovernmental Task Force on Food Derived from Biotechnology
UI	Unique Identifier
WTO	World Trade Organization

## Final Meeting Agenda

### FAO GM Foods Platform: current progress and future directions

<http://fao.org/gm-platform/>

Monday, 6 June 2015 13.10–14.30

Room 4, Centre International de Conférences Geneva (CICG), Geneva, Switzerland

Side event to the 38th Session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission

Time	Agenda Item	Presenter
13:10 – 13:15	House-keeping Announcement	
13:15 – 13:20	Welcome Remarks	Ms Masami Takeuchi, FAO HQ
13:20 – 13:25	The history of the TFFBT and its related guidelines	Mr Hiroshi Yoshikura, Former chair of the TFFBT
13:25 – 13:40	FAO GM Foods Platform: current progress and future directions	Ms Takeuchi
13:40 – 14:00	Case studies by 2 countries	The Philippines Canada
14:00 – 14:25	Q & A and discussions on future directions of the Platform	Facilitated by Ms Takeuchi
14:25 – 14:30	Conclusion and a way forward	Ms Takeuchi
	Lunch	

### Speaking points

**Prepared by Ms Ula Abdelaziz Makkawi (Sudan)**

(Senior Quality Control inspector / Food safety department,  
Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Sudan)

#### 1. Difficulties /Challenges and Needs/Demands

Sudan government has an opportunity to financial support for lab up-grading ....But the challenges which are faced are:

- Limited resources (funding to Biotech/research)
- Limited research facilities (containment facilities and upgrading of laboratories for various analytical needs related for RA and RM)
- Limited expertise and technical capacity (for e.g. human resource development by training staff in the field of biosafety and establishing of functioning IPR system is needed)

Sudan government has an opportunity to establish plans evolving strengthen biosafety regulatory system....challenges which are faced is:

- Regulatory system is still in developmental stages.

Other Challenges include:

- Reliance of the biosafety authority to handle all the issues regarding the GM crop production, food, feed, products and byproducts.
- Follow up of farmers' fields.
- Lack of well-equipped facilities(containment labs...etc)
- Lack of trained personal and expertise
- Local directives are not established
- Legal issues

It has been recognized that regional trade of GM cotton production in Sudan is not organized and markets in each country of the region are not large enough to attract biotech producing companies to authorize their products, also the commercialization of biotech crops is still in limited countries in Africa.

Sudan is in need of:

- Developing national biotechnology and biosafety policy
- Providing of necessary equipment
- Enhancing of human capacity
- Raising of public awareness (raising awareness among the public and policy makers.. avoid gaps between scientist and policy makers)
- Creating marketing survey and monitoring systems

## **2. Country-country communication as a powerful tool to overcome the problems / How to raise the awareness of the delegates**

- Participation of various stakeholders in decision making
- Dissemination of Knowledge and information
- Promote regional collaboration (staff exchange for technical working in the biosafety field)

The achievements gained from supported agencies and links such as:

- FAO GM Platform
- COMESA/ACTESA BIOTECHNOLOGY PROGRAM.
- NEPAD, Agency ABNE
- MSU biosafety program
- BCH

## **3. Members Strategic Actions for Members to involve all codex members in the Platform**

- To plan for physical meetings ,regulatory work and workshops
- International network communication for sharing information and authorized websites

## **4. FAO's support for members to involve all codex members in the platform community activities**

- Encourage Communication and sharing information through FAO GM platform. (to publish each countries National biosafety Council website through the GM platform)
- To have International consultants sign in through the GM platform.

**Speaking points**

**Mr Steve McCutcheon (Australia)**

(Chief Executive Officer, Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ), Australia)

**1. How Australia is communicating with other countries on GM food safety assessment**

There is no formal framework for this communication. It is currently occurring in a number of ways:

**a) Direct contact with delegations**

Within Australia there is close cooperation between the Office of the Gene Technology Regulator (OGTR), which regulates the growing of GM crops, and Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) which is responsible for approving the entry of GM foods into the food supply. Geographically, the two agencies are located within a 5 minute walk of each other.

As a result of both of these factors, it is common for both agencies to share information sessions for delegations visiting Canberra, to provide an overall view of how GMOs and GM food are regulated in Australia, to outline the differences/similarities in risk/safety assessment approaches between the two agencies and to hear the approaches (or intended approaches) of the country of the delegation. Delegations, even if primarily interested in only one aspect (i.e. food OR environment) appreciate seeing the bigger regulatory picture and the synergy between the two agencies. It is the preference of both agencies to adopt this joint approach rather than just having delegations visit one agency.

Over the last 3 years, delegations from Kenya, Bhutan, Japan, Ghana, Republic of Korea, China and India have visited, sometimes for only a few hours, and sometimes for up to a week, in order to learn about the Australian GM regulatory system.

Contact from other countries with either agency, in order to organize a visit, can occur through a variety of paths e.g.: a) direct liaison with someone in the agency known, or referred, to the delegation b) referral from another Australian government agency who has received an enquiry (e.g. Department of Agriculture or the Department of Foreign Affairs & Trade, c) via an Embassy d) via a non-government organization such as CropLife. In some instances funding can be made available to assist the delegation.

## **b) Working towards assessment sharing with another country**

In 2013, FSANZ and Health Canada commenced working together to develop a joint system for the safety assessment of GM foods. Such an initiative recognises the high level of commonality between the two agencies in terms of their approach to GM food safety assessment and builds on a strong history of collaboration that spans many years.

The aim of the joint work is to improve the efficiency of the pre-market safety assessment by minimising duplication as well maximising the use of existing resources while maintaining each country's sovereignty with respect to risk management and GM food authorisations.

The work is primarily focussed on the development of a system for mutual recognition of GM foods safety assessments, but for some products the agencies may decide to continue conducting their own individual assessment. Under the proposed mutual recognition system a product developer will be able to ask for one agency to undertake a pre-market safety assessment on behalf of both agencies. The safety assessment will then be used by both agencies to inform their authorisation process.

## **c) Presentation at/Involvement in international fora**

FSANZ is invited from time to time to attend workshops/symposia and give presentations on aspects of the regulatory system. These fora also provide good opportunity for discussions outside the formal agenda. As examples, in the last two years presentations have been given at

- EFSA workshop on RNA interference held in Brussels (June 2014)
- International Association for Plant Biotechnology Congress, Melbourne – presentations on the FSANZ safety assessment and on the FSANZ approach to new breeding techniques (August 2014)
- OECD Workshop on GM Animals, Melbourne (October 2014)
- Seminar on New Breeding Techniques, Manila (December 2014)
- APEC Workshop: Fostering the benefits of innovation in plant breeding and science communication, Manila (June 2015)

FSANZ also attends (and is a member of the Bureau) the OECD Task Force for the Safety of Novel Foods & Feeds, an international forum that promotes international harmonization in the safety assessment of novel foods (primarily GM foods).

The main reason that the FAO Platform exists is to satisfy the Codex recommendation<sup>4</sup> for a database to provide information for safety assessment in situations of low level

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<sup>4</sup> Outlined in Section 3 of Annex 3 of the *Codex Guideline for the Conduct of Food Safety Assessment of Foods Derived from Recombinant-DNA Plants*

presence (LLP). There are now a number of global fora for discussing LLP and Australia (including FSANZ) contributes to these.

**2. How can Australia use the Platform to share the experience of GM food safety assessment and strengthen the network among Member countries**

FSANZ is an active participant in the FAO GM Foods Platform database. Since the FAO GM Foods Platform provides the contact details of focal points it is possible for enquiries to a country to be made to that focal point or for the Platform to act as an intermediary between an enquirer and the relevant country. To date, this has only occurred a few times but it is an avenue that is implicitly favoured by the objectives of the Platform.

Since FSANZ, on its Platform country page (as well as on its own web page), provides links to all of the GM food safety assessments it has done, this provides access to any interested party of those assessments. How much this facility is actually used by other countries is not immediately obvious.

**Speaking points**  
**Prepared by Ms Pamela Suárez Brito (Mexico)**  
**(Manager of International Affairs**  
**in Food Safety/International Affairs on Food Safety, Mexico)**

**1. How Mexico is communicating with other countries on GM food safety assessment**

Mexico participates in many different international biosafety-related bodies: e.g. Codex Alimentarius Commission, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), bilateral or multilateral agreements, and also as a party of the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Cartagena Protocol participates in the different activities related to information sharing among parties and technical meetings where information on GM food safety assessments is exchanged (Technical groups, Task forces, Regional Workshops).

This allows us to have communication with different countries that are also part of these groups and generates communication channels which may be formal as for the ones derived for the working groups or informal as we share contact points on these matters.

In this sense, there is not a particular line with specific countries, but information flows continuously when needed (formal and informal communication).

**2. How can Mexico use the Platform to share the experience of GM food safety assessment and strengthen the network among Member countries**

Information sharing through different platforms is one of the current activities derived for the active participation in the different groups on which Mexico is involved. In this regard and having also as the main source of information the National System of Information in Biosafety we can share the experience on this particular subject.

Also discussion fora may be of interest in order to facilitate Platform utilization and Mexico could participate.

**3. What are the FAO's possible role to support the Platform community network**

- Feedback on missing data, double check (control) of submitted data, highlight mistakes while feeding the different data bases
- Facilitating communication with innovative interacting platforms and harmonized formats, helping to develop communication strategies and tools for different purposes

- Information sharing among platforms (interconnectivity) will facilitate submission and availability of information (BioTrack Product Database, FAO GM Foods Platform, Biosafety Clearing-House (BCH))
- Contribute to capacity building: workshops on how to use databases, sharing experiences and best practices

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