

**For Discussion on  
11 April 2013**

**Discussion Paper GMO 02/2013**

**Genetically Modified Organisms  
(Control of Release) Ordinance Cap. 607**

**Expert Group**

**Report on the Public Awareness and Education Programme**

**Purpose**

The purpose of this paper is to inform Members of our public awareness and education work on genetically modified organisms (GMOs).

**Background**

2. The Genetically Modified Organisms (Control of Release) Ordinance (the Ordinance) took effect on 1 March 2011. The objective of the Ordinance is to give effect to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety (the Protocol) and to regulate the release into the environment of GMOs and their import and export.

3. Article 23 of the Protocol specifies that Parties shall promote and facilitate public awareness, education and participation concerning the safe transfer, handling and use of GMOs and inform its public about the means of public access to the Biosafety Clearing-house. The Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD), being the local Competent Authority, has initiated a number of activities to promote public awareness and understanding on the regulatory control of the Ordinance.

**Public Awareness and Education Programme**

4. To implement the Ordinance in Hong Kong effectively, it is imperative to maximize the use of communication tools and outreach opportunities to raise public awareness on the local control of GMOs. The objectives of our public awareness and education programme are:

- To increase public awareness and understanding of the Ordinance, through publicizing and promoting the Ordinance;

- To inform and educate different target audience about the Ordinance, through sharing of information and news; and
- To engage and build collaborative partnerships with key stakeholders, so as to broaden support for the implementation of the Ordinance.

The following public awareness and education work have been carried out.

#### Promotional Materials

5. To allow a better understanding of the Ordinance by the general public and local farmers, 10,000 copies of pamphlet on avoidance of unintentional growing of genetically modified (GM) crops were produced and distributed to about 1,900 registered local farmers. The pamphlets were also distributed in 20 public enquiry service centres, 26 public libraries, 9 country park visitor centres, the Hong Kong Wetland Park, and 26 co-operative societies under the Federation of Vegetable Marketing Co-operative Societies. At the same time, 1,000 copies of the posters on the same topic were also produced and displayed in the above-mentioned venues.

6. Six sets of target-specific pamphlets focusing respectively on GM cut flowers, GM aquarium fish, seeds of GM crops, GMOs for food, feed or processing, live recombinant veterinary vaccines and GMOs in research institutes and laboratories, were distributed to the relevant stakeholders. Over 4,000 copies of these pamphlets were distributed.

#### GMOs Register

7. The online GMOs Register ([www.afcd.gov.hk/gmo](http://www.afcd.gov.hk/gmo)) allows the public to readily access to information on the Ordinance, including, for example, information about major events and new developments, applications, relevant documents and guidelines, links to relevant websites, and other materials on GMOs. The GMOs Register is updated regularly to provide the most up-to-date information of the Ordinance. The GMOs Register attracted about 79,000 visits since its launching in January 2011.

#### Seminar

8. To give the local farmers a better understanding of the control regime and

requirements of the Ordinance, a seminar was organized at the Tai Lung Experimental Station on 23 September 2011. Around 100 interested participants, including tenant farmers, representatives from local farms, green groups and organic farmers, attended the seminar.

#### Advertisement

9. A total of 15 panels were displayed at the platform and concourse at eight MTR stations from 2 November 2012 to 24 January 2013 with an aim to advising the general public to avoid planting unapproved GM crops in their backyards.

10. To arouse public awareness and understanding on the regulatory control of the Ordinance, two bilingual videos were broadcasted at the Baggage Reclaim Hall and T2 Departure Hall in the Hong Kong International Airport for 26 weeks starting from 1 February 2013 (till 31 July 2013).

#### Exhibition

11. To convey the message of GMOs and the related legislative controls to the general public, a roving exhibition entitled “Learning More about the Genetically Modified Organisms (Control of Release) Ordinance” was held in December 2012. A total of 16 panels were displayed in four public venues including government offices, community hall and theatre in Cheung Sha Wan, Fanling, Shatin and Yuen long.

#### Circular Letter

12. Circular letters were distributed to particular stakeholders to provide sample forms and up-to-date information regarding the Ordinance. During 2011- 2013, four circular letters (i.e. the commencement of the Ordinance, expiration of the transitional period, commencement of Exemption Notice and control of the Ordinance) were issued to 3,500 stakeholders.

#### Telephone Hotline

13. Public members may make general enquiries about the Ordinance via the Government’s telephone hotline 1823. We have also listed a dedicated telephone line (2150 6947) in the promotional materials and circular letters for answering specific questions about the Ordinance.

## **The Way Forward**

14. AFCD will continue the publicity and education efforts, on the control of the Ordinance in 2013-14. Also, we will make use of the GMOs Register and circular letters to disseminate information on GMOs and notify relevant stakeholders on any latest news on the control of the Ordinance.

## **Advice Sought**

15. Members are invited to note and provide advice on the public awareness and education programme on GMOs and the Ordinance.

**Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department**  
**March 2013**