NBII Hosts U.S. Regulatory Agencies Unified Biotechnology Web Site

At the heart of the Web site is a searchable database that contains information about genetically engineered crop plants intended for food or feed that have completed all recommended or required review for food, feed, or planting use in the United States.

The U.S. Regulatory Agencies Unified Biotechnology Web site <http://usbiotechreg.nbii.gov> – developed with guidance from the U.S. State Department and hosted by the National Biological Information Infrastructure (NBII) – focuses on the agricultural products of modern biotechnology. The U.S. federal government's coordinated science-based system ensures new biotechnology products are safe for the environment as well as human and animal health.

The partnership-driven site brings together agricultural biotechnology regulations from three federal agencies: the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), the U.S. Department of Health and Human Service's Food and Drug Administration (FDA), and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). These three agencies share responsibility for regulating agricultural biotechnology in the United States.

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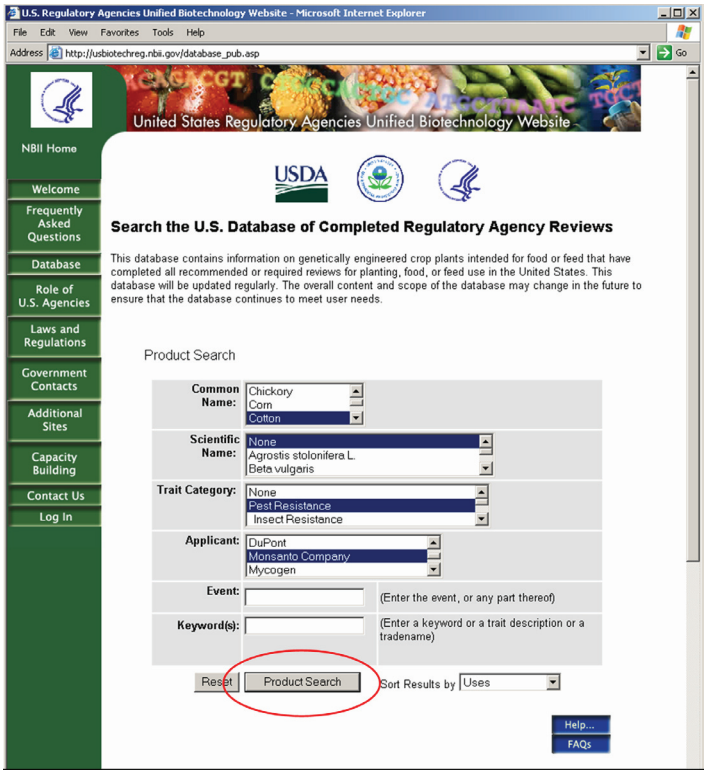

U.S. Database of Completed Regulatory Agency Reviews

The user friendly Web site and database have been developed to ensure ease of use. Information on a specific crop variety can be searched for by common name, scientific name, trait category, applicant name, event, or key word. Once the variety is found, just click on the button for "more information" which leads to a page with links to regulatory reports on engineered food plants that have completed appropriate U.S. government reviews.

Related information on the site includes:

- Information about U.S. laws and regulations governing agricultural biotechnology risk assessment.
- Frequently Asked Questions page that provides straightforward answers to most commonly asked questions about U.S. biotechnology regulations.
- Contact information for regulatory authorities and resource staff in the U.S. government.
- U.S. template software for its Web site and database, which is freely available for other countries to use in designing their own national Biosafety Web sites and databases.

Information from the database on this Web site concerning living modified organisms (LMOs) that have been reviewed in the United States for use

Photo Credit: Doug Wilson (USDA, ARS)

in food, feed, or processing as well as environmental release is also available on the Biosafety Clearing-House (BCH) mechanism's central portal <http://bch.cbd.int/>.

The BCH is an international information exchange mechanism established by the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety to assist parties in the implementation of their provisions and to facilitate sharing of information on, and experience with, LMOs.

Role of the U.S. Department of State

The Department of State serves as the U.S. focal point for the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety and its parent treaty, the U.N. Convention on Biological Diversity. In this capacity, the Department of State will interact with the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), EPA, FDA, and APHIS to coordinate the sharing of U.S. government information via the BCH. The Department of State will keep the U.S. agencies apprised of international biosafety issues affecting information sharing, as part of its role as chair of the Biotechnology Regulations Interagency Working Group.

Role of the U.S. Regulatory Agencies

The role of the three regulatory agencies – the EPA, APHIS, and FDA – within this partnership is to provide the content for the Web site and related databases with respect to their activities in the regulation of products of agricultural biotechnology.

Role of the National Biological Information Infrastructure

The role of the NBII in this endeavor is to provide information technology support and infrastructure to create, update, and maintain the Web site. This includes the maintenance of content through a central database with data provided by the EPA, APHIS, and the FDA. The NBII also has the responsibility for establishing the appropriate protocols and technologies for linking the U.S. database to the international BCH database.

Capacity Building Efforts

The development of a National Framework for Biosafety is a complex process that involves the gathering and storing of information on laws and regulations, national competent authorities, and decisions on LMOs. Such information can be stored and managed locally, and then reported to the International BCH as prescribed by the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety. The development of such a framework and database can be greatly facilitated through use of a database template, into which new or existing data can be entered.

What is the NBII?

The NBII <www.nbii.gov> is a Web-based system coordinated by the USGS that links diverse, high-quality biological databases, information products, and analytical tools maintained by NBII partners. These partners come from government agencies, academic institutions, non-government organizations, and private industry. NBII partners and collaborators also work on new standards, tools, and technologies that make it easier to find, integrate, and apply biological resources information.

Since its founding, the NBII's success has been rooted in the cooperation and collaboration embodied in the NBII Program's slogan, "Building Knowledge Through Partnerships."

Photo Credit: Keith Weller (USDA, ARS)

The United States has invested considerable time and resources into the creation of its Web site and database and wishes to share its experience with others. By doing so, it hopes to facilitate transparent, science-based evaluations of LMOs.

Through the NBII, the United States will provide support to countries wishing to use the database and Web site templates by sponsoring training workshops in conjunction with the United Nations Environment Program-Global Environment Fund Biosafety Clearing-House Project as well as offer phone and e-mail technical support.

For More Information

To learn more about technology, template software, and capacity building assistance, contact:

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