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## Dominican Republic

## Biotechnology

## Annual

## 2007

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**Report Highlights:**

The Dominican Republic ratified the Cartagena Protocol in early 2006. The UNEP provided funds to assist the DR government with drafting a biosafety law. The draft law is currently under review at the Ministry of Environment. There are no biotechnology crops being grown in the Dominican Republic. There has not been any apparent active consumer campaigns regarding biotech products.

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Includes PSD Changes: No  
Includes Trade Matrix: No  
Annual Report  
Santo Domingo [DR1]  
[DR]

Table of Contents

**SECTION I: Executive Summary ..... 3**  
**SECTION II: Biotechnology Trade and Promotion ..... 3**  
**SECTION III: Biotechnology POLICY ..... 3**  
    Biotechnology Policy..... 3  
    Approved Biotechnology Crops ..... 5  
    Labeling..... 5  
    Trade Barriers ..... 5  
**SECTION IV: MARKETING ISSUES ..... 5**  
**SECTION V: CAPACITY BUILDING AND OUTREACH ..... 5**  
**SECTION VI: REFERENCE MATERIAL ..... 6**

**SECTION I: Executive Summary**

The Dominican Republic is a strong market for U.S. feed grains, oilseeds and processed food products from the United States. Due to this demand, we would not expect that the government would implement legislation that would jeopardize the livestock industry.

**SECTION II: BIOTECHNOLOGY AND TRADE PROMOTION**

The Dominican Republic (DR) does not produce any genetically modified crops and there are no crops under development that would be in the market in the coming years. The country relies on U.S. corn and soybean meal for the animal feed industry.

<b>Selected U.S. Exports to the Dominican Republic CY 2006</b>	
<b>Commodity</b>	<b>Total Exports Value (In thousands of \$)</b>
Coarse grains	147,817
Soybeans	2,209
Cotton	1,231
Soybean Meal	90,268
Soybean Oil	12,620
Other Vegetable Oils	7,908
<b>Total</b>	<b>262,053</b>

Source: Department of Commerce, U.S. Census Bureau, Foreign Trade Statistics

Low-tech tissue culture, a biotechnology reproduction technique, has made a significant contribution to the progress of specific areas of the Dominican agricultural production. Over a dozen crops have been reproduced using this method, thereby facilitating their commercial exploitation. *In vitro* culture has also facilitated the introduction of PHIA varieties of *Musaceae* from Honduras, which are resistant to Black Sigatoka.

**SECTION III: BIOTECHNOLOGY POLICY****Country's Regulatory Framework**

The Dominican Republic overall is pro-biotech but does not have a regulatory system yet to control the domestic use or importation of genetically modified organisms (GMO). Although the Dominican Republic ratified the Cartagena Protocol in December 2005 and proclaimed it in January 2006, the law on biosafety is not in place.

There are four government entities that are involved in setting biotech policy for the country. The Ministry of the Environment and Natural Resources (ME&NR), Biodiversity and Wildlife Division, the IDIAF (Dominican Research Institute in Agriculture, livestock and Forestry), CEDAF (Agriculture and Forestry Development Center), and the Ministry of Agriculture (SEA).

Ministry of the Environment and Natural Resources is the lead agency responsible for drafting the biosafety legislation. Within this organization, the Wild Life Division was responsible for the initial draft, when they received a grant from UNEP to help them on the initial draft of the legislation. In principle the draft followed the regulatory framework of the UNEP. Since the

Cartagena Protocol in 2006 was ratified, the initial draft has moved very slowly and is currently at the MNR&E, Planning Division for review.

The draft document covers the regulatory framework that includes the national policy for biotechnology, a national policy for bio-safety, an administrative and regulatory system for imports of GMO's, a decision-making support system, and a mechanism for social participation and consultation. Some specific aspects of labeling were discussed and debated, particularly a statement that states: "it may contain" versus "it contains" GMO material. The document is now at the Ministry of Environment's Planning and Legal department so that observations can be incorporated before they would consider presenting the proposal to the Legislative Chambers for review and then begin the process of approval and ratification.

It is important to note that, although it is early to anticipate, there is a new UNEP project on trade capacity building on biotechnology biosafety. The new project plans to create a Consumer Rights Institute and a law for Consumer Protection. This new proposal will include the topic on GMOs. Information will be added as it becomes available.

The second and third organizations work together and have been involved as technical support to the Ministry of Environment and as leader during the initial discussions that lead to the draft proposal law. Their main focus is around science and how it can show the benefits, and perhaps express their concerns, on how the biotechnological processes and applications available can help the agricultural sector. As part of their main functions, they both work together with the Ministry of Environment on regulatory aspects.

The Ministry of Agriculture, and within the Ministry, the Plant Health Department is responsible for regulating and assuring safe entry of plant products to the country. As part of this responsibility the Ministry interacts with other ministries such as the MNR&E, Ministry of Health, in health related issues such as GMO. This office has shown very limited involvement in GMO regulation activities, except for authorization and follow-up of seed trials with IDIAF/CEDAF.

The individual organization main goals are:

- 1) **ME&NR** is the Ministry responsible for the oversight and interaction among the Economic, Social and Administrative Planning sectors, industry, civil society and public and private organizations as they relate to programming and policies related to the environment and natural resources, including the country's strategy of national conservation and biodiversity.
- 2) **CEDAF** is a non-profit organization that promotes sustainable development of the agricultural, livestock and forestry sectors through training, information recourses and sector policy and strategic analysis. Its focus is to stimulate competitive agriculture in order to decrease poverty levels and to protect the environment.
- 3) **IDIAF** is a Dominican Government sponsored institution and its function relate to agriculture, livestock and forestry research. Its strategic focus is to understand market dynamics, natural resources and environment and food safety.
- 4) **SEA** is a the government ministry in charge of formulating and directing livestock and agricultural policies, regulating animal and plant health, promote capacity building, assist in scientific research, etc.

## Approved Biotechnology Crops

Because of the lack of a regulatory framework, there are no biotechnology crops currently approved for direct consumption, processing, or animal feed. The DR does not plan to develop GMO seeds. However, concerns about the technology and its coexistence with organic farming exist. The DR currently exports organic crops (plantains, coffee, cocoa) to the European Union and has plans to market such products to the United States.

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## Labeling

The DR does not currently require labeling on GMO ingredients or content in processed products. General labeling requirements on prepackaged foods is controlled by the Ministry of Industry and Commerce and is regulated by a sub-division of the Bureau of Norms and Standards.

General labeling requirements are as follows: NORDOM 53, which is in place and anticipated to be enforced before the end of 2007, follows the *Codex Alimentarius* standard and should be in Spanish language. Details are described in the Food and Agricultural Import Regulations and Standards report (DR6014 and DR7014), available on the Foreign Agricultural Service website.

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## Trade Barriers

The Dominican Republic has a rule in place, which requires, for import purposes that the phytosanitary certificate for corn states that it "does not contain GMO material". However this rule has not been enforced. In principle, the draft legislation to implement the Cartagena Protocol has the potential to affect trade in products that contain GMOs since the issue of traceability and labeling are part of this agreement. We will have further details when the document becomes available.

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## SECTION IV: MARKETING ISSUES

In 2005, several international non-governmental organizations publicly questioned the safety of GMOs, generating significant press coverage, but nothing has been stated in the press for the last twelve months.

## SECTION V: CAPACITY BUILDING AND OUTREACH

In 2003, State Department brought a guest speaker to do a presentation on Biotechnology in Santo Domingo. A year later, in 2004, through the Cochran Fellowship Program, two university professors received training in this area at Michigan State University. Furthermore, a Latin American forum in biotechnology took place in the DR in 2004 where the scientist in the region discussed, among other topics, GMO applications and use.

The Superior Agriculture Institute (ISA) and the CEDAF are evaluating the possibility of a biotechnology Masters Degree program in the Dominican Republic. Recently (June 2007) a poultry and swine association (APORCI) inaugurated, an applied low-tech biotechnology waste management project, six bio-digesters for biogas and organic fertilizer production. Its

construction and operation was sponsored by USAID grant and the Ministry of the Environment. The project was estimated at US\$150,000.

**SECTION VI: REFERENCE MATERIAL**

Anon. NORDOM 53, Dirección General de Normas y Control de Calidad, Secretaría de Estado Industria y Comercio, Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, 2002.

Perez, Rufino. Biotechnology in the Dominican Republic: Perspectives and Opportunities, ALIMENTEC,S.A. Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, June 2005.

Ministry of the Environment and Wildlife has several rules, Procedures and Standards in Place. None of them relate to biotechnology.

The draft of the proposed law on biosafety is not yet available.