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Report Highlights:

The Dominican Republic ratified the Cartagena Biosafety Protocol in 2006. The UNEP provided funds to assist the Dominican Government with drafting the biosafety law. The draft law remains under review at the Ministry of the Environment. In principle, the draft legislation has the potential to affect trade in products that contain GMOs since the issue of traceability and labeling part of the agreement. There are no biotechnology crops being grown in the Dominican Republic. There have not been any apparent active consumer campaigns regarding biotech products.

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

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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 RESEARCH, TRADE AND PRODUCTION

a) Biotechnology crops: 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 products for the animal feed industry.

b) Biotechnology Research Efforts: 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.

c) Biotechnology crops under development: There are currently no biotechnology crops under development nor anticipated any new developments in the coming year.

d) Biotechnology product use: The Dominican Republic relies on coarse grains and soybean products from the United States for their animal feed production. As a consequence, the poultry and swine industry, and to a lesser extent, the dairy industry all rely on U.S. products for their livestock development and commercial output through imported feed ingredients. In addition, the U.S. has remained as the best reliable supplier because of proximity, quality and price.

The following table presents U.S. exports on selected items:

Selected U.S. Exports to the Dominican Republic CY 2007	
Commodity	Total Exports Value (In thousands of \$)
Coarse grains	189,443
Cotton	922
Soybean Meal	121,587
Soybean Oil	10,782
Other Vegetable Oils	9,129
Total	331,863

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

e) Food aid: The country is not a recipient of food aid due to their income per capita level. Nonetheless in cases of disasters, such as excessive rains, storms and hurricanes the country may become available for disaster relief programs. In neither case, biotechnology will not be an issue in the country's acceptance of food aid. There are other USDA programs such as Food for Progress where the Dominican Republic is one of the targeted countries in 2008/09.

f) Biotechnology crops: The country does not produce nor export biotechnology crops. Practically all biotechnology crops used originate from the United States.

SECTION III: BIOTECHNOLOGY POLICY

a) 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 three government Ministries involved in setting biotech policy for the country: the Ministry of the Environment and Natural Resources (ME&NR), Biodiversity and Wildlife Division; the Ministry of Agriculture (SEA), Plant Health Division and the Ministry of Public Health (SESPAS). In addition there are several other government entities as part of the "commission" participating in the scientific aspects as they relate to policy recommendations. Among these are: the CONIAF (National Council for Agriculture and Forestry) where IDIAF (Dominican Research Institute in Agriculture, livestock and Forestry), CEDAF (Agriculture and Forestry Development Center) and IIBI (Biotechnology and Industry Innovation Institute) are unit members. There are two leading universities that also participate in their forum deliberations: UNPHU (Pedro Henriquez Ureña National University) and UASD (Santo Domingo Autonomous University).

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 created a Consumer Rights Institute (inaugurated on 6-19-2008) and a law for Consumer Protection (Law 358-05). This organization is currently operating under the Ministry of Industry and Commerce. Within their attributions is the topic on GMOs. Information will be added as it becomes available.

The other organizations work together and have been involved in providing technical support to the Ministry of Environment and as leader during the initial discussions that lead to the draft proposal law. As part of their main functions, they serve as support entities with the Ministry of Environment on regulatory aspects. 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.

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 main individual organization goals are:

a.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.

a.2) **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.

a.3) **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.

a.4) **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.

a.5) **IIBI** is a Dominican Government sponsored institution which promotes technology development in areas such as biotechnology and capacity building, in order to strengthen the local capability so the country could penetrate competitively and trade in the international market.

b) 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 currently 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 (bananas, coffee, cocoa) to the European Union and has plans to market such products to the United States.

The Dominican market consumes corn and soybean products almost exclusively from the United States.

c) Biotechnology testing

The Ministry of Agriculture, Plant Health Division may allow testing for biotechnology crops under supervision of IDIAF. There have been no biotechnology crops being tested during the last year and currently there are no plans for the near future.

Plant Health officials from the Ministry of Agriculture and Ministry of Environment try to participate in international standard-setting bodies when they have availability of funds. This is not a common practice.

d) 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 it is partially enforced since early 2008, follows the *Codex Alimentarius* standard and should be in Spanish language. Details are described in the Food and Agricultural Import Regulations and Standards report (DR7014), available on the Foreign Agricultural Service website.

e) 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". Nonetheless the Plant Health officials are aware of this but it has not been enforced since it became a requirement several years ago. In addition, the country has no possibility of producing the quantities of corn and soybean products required by the domestic industry (over 1.5 million tons, most of it imported from the United States).

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. The draft law is still under revision within the Ministry of Environment. We will have further details when the document becomes available.

SECTION IV: NEW TECHNOLOGIES

There are no new technologies evolving in the research arena, nor agricultural products nor animal products under development for commercialization in the Dominican Republic.

There is no public awareness on emerging technologies related to food and agriculture except some negative press expressing awareness of the dramatic increase of international prices for feed and feed ingredients. GODR officials and private sector are aware of the current benefits of GMO crops and we expect this trend to continue.

SECTION V: 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 VI: 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. In 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.

Our office is aware that some producers have invested in bio-digesters for contaminant control and energy generation with limited success.

SECTION VII: 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.