

Country Updates on the GMO Amendment Ratification in the Republic of Armenia

The 4th joint Aarhus Convention/
Convention on Biological Diversity
Global Round Table on Public
Awareness, Access to Information and
Public Participation regarding
LMOs/GMOs

Geneva, on 11 and 12 December 2023

Processes since 2005

legislative regulations

In 2012

The Law of the RA on Food Safety defines GMOs as any biological entity obtained by genetic engineering methods that has the ability to transmit or reproduce genetic material and (or) contains genetically engineered material and is different from natural organisms.

In 2014

In Armenia, the sale of products containing GMOs wasn't totally prohibited, but there was a requirement that "if GM food/feed products in a proportion is higher than 0.9 percent of the food/feed ingredients considered, then it should be marked in a visible part".

If there was not complete information in the documents accompanying the goods when they were imported, sampling was done and an examination was required.

the font and placement area was determined at the manufacturer's discretion, which could be indicated in small print and anywhere on the label

December 2017

Additional labeling requirements for foods containing GMOs

The Eurasian Economic Commission adopted a decision by which the presence of the GMO mark will become mandatory for those foods that have been produced using genetically modified organisms and whose GMO content exceeds 0.9%.

The change was also introduced in the technical regulations of the Customs Union "Food products regarding their labeling" (CU TC 022/2011).

the technical regulation defines a clear font size for the GMO mark and requires the mark being printed in such a way that it is easy to read and visible throughout the period of validity.

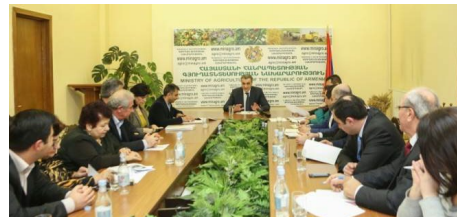
The Process of Adopting the Law on GMOs & Public Participation

Establishment of Working/Expert Groups

2019

(Revised in 2023)

The procedure of the **expert group formation** on Genetically Modified Organisms, as well as its powers and duties are defined by the order of the RA Minister of Economy.



<https://armenpress.am/arm/news/923382>

2012

Discussions of the RA Draft Law “On the Use of Genetically Modified Organisms”.



17 January 2023

The RA Law “On GMOs” was adopted



<https://www.hetq.am/hy/article/150032>

Steps Following the Adoption of the Law on GMOs

The law defines

Article 9. Provision of Information on the Use of GMOs and Public Awareness

- The exchange of information regarding the detection of cases of GMO use is carried out in accordance with the procedure established by the legislation of the RA and international agreements.
- The authorized body informs the public through mass media about the measures aimed at preventing situations arising from the use of GMOs or their combinations.
- The authorized body provides information to the public about the use of GMOs in accordance with the RA legislation through mass media, electronic means of communication, organization of public hearings, official website and other means not prohibited by the RA legislation:
 - 1) monitoring results,
 - 2) licensing,
 - 3) emergency situation,
 - 4) informing the public about other data defined by this law and the RA legislation.
- The authorized body ensures public participation in the processes defined by this law by providing information and organizing public hearings.

September 2023

- prevention of hazards exposure to the environment, human life and health, agricultural lands due to the function and biohazards of genetically modified organisms and damages, achieved on approving the state program of elimination measures.

<https://www.irtek.am/views/act.aspx?aid=122898>

- Prevention of hazards exposure to the environment, human life and health, agricultural lands due to the function and biohazards of GMOs and damages, achieved on approving the state program of elimination measures.

(Government Decree, September 14, 2023)

- Determining the procedure of import, export and destruction of GMOs for scientific research and experimental works.

(Government Decree, November 10, 2023)

Process Following the Adoption of the Law

Challenges & Lessons Learnt

- Scientific Controversy:

The scientific community often has differing opinions on the safety and impact of GMOs.

- Public Concerns;
- Public Awareness and Perception:

Misinformation or lack of awareness lead to resistance or skepticism about GMO-related legislation.



Political Opposition



Political Will

- Economic Considerations:

Prohibiting GMOs may impact the productivity and competitiveness of the agricultural sector, leading to economic concerns.

- Trade Implications:

Implementing strict regulations against GMOs may lead to trade barriers and disputes with trading partners.

- Regulatory Infrastructure:

Developing and implementing effective regulations requires a robust regulatory infrastructure.

- Enforcement Challenges:

Even if a law is passed, enforcing a ban on GMOs can be challenging. f.e. availability of specialized laboratories.

Armenia has a rich biodiversity and it is extremely important to predict and prevent potential risks

Name	Number of species	Features	Number of species
Vascular plants	3800	Endemic animals (3% of the fauna)	500
Algae	428	Endemic plants (3.8% of the flora)	144
Mosses	399	Plants included in the Red Book (11.89% of flora)	452
Mushrooms	4500	Included in the RA Red Book of Animals (1.8% of fauna)	308
Lichens	464	Density of superior plants (1000 sq. km)	107
Vertebrates	549		
Invertebrates	17200		



NATIONAL SEMINARS FOR ARMENIA ON THE BIOSAFETY CLEARING-HOUSE MECHANISM

Held on
10-11 December 2021

16-17 March 2022

- The representatives of the Department of Agriculture and Environmental Protection of all regional governorates of the Republic of Armenia, employees of structures subordinate to the Ministry of Environment, and non-governmental organizations were invited to participate in the seminars.
- The aim of the workshop was to acquaint all interested parties with the methods of effective information use and mechanisms available in the biosafety information platform created within the framework of the Cartagena Protocol on biosafety, as well as with the procedures of biosafety-related information publication.



Workshop Objectives

- **Enhance the national capacity to use the BCH Central Portal to find and register information,**
- **Define procedure or mechanisms to transmit information to the BCH,**
- **Update the workplan on:**
 - organizational Procedures and Mechanism and Information Flow into the BCH,
 - engaging educational sectors in national biosafety and BCH training,
 - transferring the BCH workshop development know-how to national institutions and trainers,
 - enhancing the national, regional and international cooperation where appropriate with international agencies, especially those having a stake in BCH and biosafety Projects.
- **Identify National and Regional “Centers of Excellence” and Programs that may cater to Biosafety and BCH capacity building initiatives.**
- **Review the existing training materials and the virtual learning environment (VLE) and brainstorm on what kind of training materials need to be developed.**

Participants



specialists from the
Ministry of
Environment,



representatives of
state and private
laboratories,



specialists from other
appropriate
ministries,



appropriate
representatives from
municipal and
regional
governments,



participants from
different social
organizations.

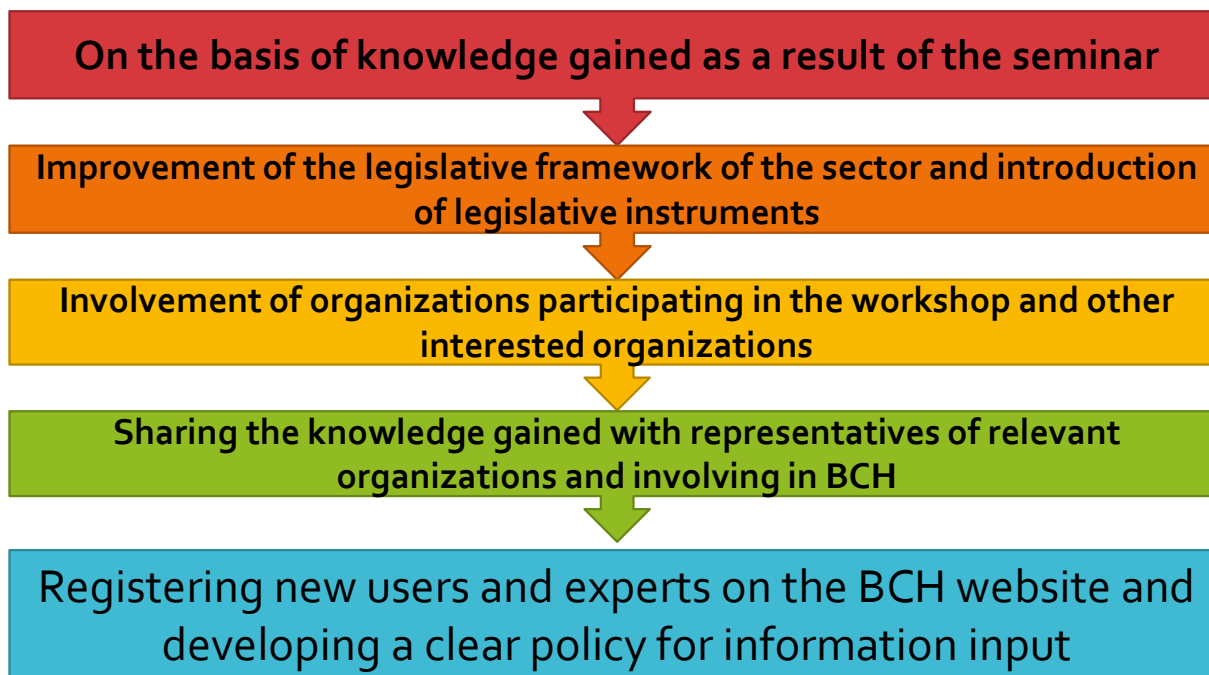
Learning Outcomes

- Demonstrate how to use the BCH to help in their biosafety decision making.
- Make biosafety management decisions based on information obtained from the BCH.
- Register biosafety information in the BCH.
- Analyze and suggest ways to enhance the Armenian BCH.

Public and private institutions related to GMOs

- National security service,
- Security council office of RA,
- Ministry of Environment,
- Ministry of Economy,
- Ministry of Health,
- Customs service of RA,
- Republican veterinary-sanitary and phytosanitary laboratory services center under food safety inspection body,
- Private laboratories,
- Other appropriate institutions.

Synergy formation strategy



Plans for the Future.

The GMO Amendment ratification process has started!

- GMO amendment is translated into Armenian.
- The issue was discussed at the Ministry of Environment involving related units.
- The request has been sent to other state bodies for their opinion.
- Public awareness activities and public discussion are scheduled.
- Other appropriate procedures are planned in accordance with the legislation.

Thank You!

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“Khustup” State Sanctuary