

Target 17: Biotechnology

Elements that should be part of the target

➤ Precautionary Principle to address adverse impacts

Identify, prevent, and control actual and potential adverse impacts of biotechnology on biodiversity, applying the precautionary principle.

➤ Modern biotechnology and synthetic biology

Synthetic biology and other new genetic techniques fall within the scope of modern biotechnology. During the timeframe of the GBF, synthetic biology and other new genetic techniques will be increasingly used, hence their risks should also be adequately addressed. Some parties have threatened to derail decision-making on Synthetic biology under CBD if not specifically mentioned by GBF.

➤ Parts and products (from biotechnology)

Living Modified Organisms (LMOs) are too limited in scope, and decisions under the CBD regarding biotechnology, such as synthetic biology, go beyond LMOs and also address the organisms, components and products of synthetic biology. This is important because the LMO isn't the only point of impact; synthetic DNA/RNA, for example, can have direct impacts on the conservation of biodiversity in severe ways. Thus, the CBD should continue to discuss the "parts, organisms and products of synthetic biology," as a package term, rather than just LMOs.

➤ Horizon scanning, monitoring and assessment

Horizon scanning, monitoring and assessment are relevant to modern biotechnology, including synthetic biology and other new genetic techniques, and would allow for the rapid and fast-paced developments in the field to be reviewed, and their potential adverse effects anticipated, monitored and assessed.

➤ The need for regulation

Article 8(g) of the CBD obliges Parties to establish or maintain means to regulate the risks associated with living modified organisms (LMOs) resulting from biotechnology. The Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety is the legally-binding instrument that implements Article 8(g) and Parties have to take necessary and appropriate legal, administrative and other measures to implement their obligations.

Article 14, Impact Assessment and minimising adverse impacts, is important for the whole GBF and particularly target 17.

➤ Socio-economic considerations

Article 26 of the Cartagena Protocol establishes the right of Parties to take into account socio-economic considerations, especially with regard to the value of biodiversity to indigenous peoples and local communities (IPLCs). The roots of this article are in the CBD's Article 8(j), which sets out obligations with respect to the "knowledge, innovations and practices of indigenous and local communities embodying traditional lifestyles".

➤ Liability and redress

Article 14 of the CBD obliges Parties to examine the issue of liability and redress for damage to biodiversity.

➤ Free, prior and informed consent

The principle of free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) for IPLCs is established and implemented not only by the CBD, but also international human rights standards such as the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. CBD COP Decision 14/19 in particular

calls for FPIC (or the equivalent at national level) of potentially affected IPLCs to be sought or obtained in relation to the environmental release of all new technologies and consent for their use must be discussed and obtained at global level of gene drive organisms.

- In accordance with fairness and equity, taking into account historical patterns of production and consumption

The responsibility for taking action has to first lie with those who are most responsible for unsustainable production and consumption.

Elements that should NOT be part of the target

- Innovation principle

This term is applied to new technologies (synthetic biology, geoengineering) proposed to address problems caused by the economic model of endless growth instead of directly addressing the consequences of that model.

- Benefits of biotechnology

The use of the word benefits is manipulative and experience to date with GM crops shows that the impacts on biodiversity and human health where they are grown are negative

- Restriction of this target to Cartagena parties

The GBF needs to be applicable to all CBD parties.