

Telegram UNCLASSIFIED STATE 00053346

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TO ALL DIPLOMATIC AND CONSULAR POSTS COLLECTIVE

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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 STATE 053346

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: ETRD, EAGR, EAID, ECON, TBIO

SUBJECT: AGRICULTURAL BIOTECHNOLOGY AS A TOOL TO FIGHT
HUNGER

REF: A) State 47539, B) State 52628

1. This is an action request. Please see paragraph
4.

2. Summary. In his May 1 announcement of the U.S.
response to the food price crisis, President Bush
called on countries to eliminate barriers to advanced
crops developed through biotechnology. Such crops are
crucial to increasing agricultural productivity and
production in the developing world. This is a core
element of the U.S. strategy to address the food price
crisis (Ref A). Department requests Embassies, as
appropriate, to approach host governments on the
important role agricultural biotechnology can play in
addressing the global food price crisis, and to take
steps to ensure that this valuable technology is put
to work to help end world hunger. This cable provides
an aide-memoire for use in discussions of this issue
with host country officials and provides links to
useful background information. End summary.

OBJECTIVES

3. Embassies should pursue the following objectives:

-- Explain the role that agricultural biotechnology
can play in addressing the food price crisis and
reducing world hunger.

-- Encourage contributions to research that increase
productivity of staple crops in developing countries.

-- Seek support from G8 countries for a strong G8

role in removing barriers to trade in agricultural biotechnology products.

-- Urge the EU and its member states to abide by the WTO panel decision and expedite approvals of agricultural biotechnology products.

Action Request and Reporting Deadline

4. As appropriate, posts are requested to engage host country officials to urge greater acceptance of agricultural biotechnology, based on scientific risk assessment, as a useful tool in the effort to increase global agricultural productivity and eliminate global hunger. An aide-memoire is provided in paragraph 5 and links to background information are provided in paragraph 6 to assist with this effort. Posts in G-8 and EU capitals and USEU Brussels are provided additional material (marked as such in the body of the Aide Memoire) for use in their demarches. Please report the results of this engagement by May 23 via cable slugged for EEB/TPP/ABT - Gary A. Clements and Jack A. Bobo and USDA/FAS for CJACKSON and MHOUSE. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

5. Aide-Memoire

Biotechnology and Food Security

On May 1, President Bush, in the course of announcing the U.S. response to the food price crisis, noted "We're also urging countries to remove barriers to advanced crops developed through biotechnology. These crops are safe, they're resistant to drought and disease, and they hold the promise of producing more food for more people."

Private foundations and biotechnology companies are working with governments and researchers in regions around the world to increase the yields and enhance the nutritional value of food crops native to those regions. Governments should strongly support these efforts.

Biotechnology was a critical component of the remarkable agricultural productivity and production gains of the first Green Revolution in Asia. It also provides agriculture unique opportunities for increasing the quantity, reliability and nutritional quality of the food supply, and for addressing some

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existing agricultural health (worker exposure) and environmental problems.

Many are calling for a second Green Revolution in

Africa. Biotechnology has the potential to help create a sustainable and secure food supply and to promote economic growth. It can create useful new crop varieties much faster than can conventional methods, and thus offer farmers greater, not fewer, choices at no greater risk than conventional or non-modified products.

Biotechnology can increase food production on existing land, reducing the need to cut forests or drain watersheds to plant crops. Biotechnology can develop new seeds for currently uncultivable or marginal lands.

Biotechnology is a boon to the environment and can reduce the use of our increasingly precious water by developing seeds/plants that are drought-resistant. Current crops are already reducing the use of water through greater utilization of low-till and no-till agriculture. It can also reduce the use of damaging chemicals used to control pests and crop diseases and to slow down spoilage.

(For G-8 capitals) A Role for the G-8

The G8 should take the lead in removing barriers to trade in agricultural biotechnology products. G8 countries should abide by global trade rules and accept science-based evaluations of food production methods. G8 members should help developing countries build their capacity to assess and manage properly the risks posed by agricultural biotechnology so as to increase their confidence in taking advantage of this technology.

The responsibility of the EU and its Member States
(For EU Member State capitals and USEU Brussels)

The EU needs to abide by the decision of the WTO panel in the biotech case brought by the U.S., Canada and Argentina. The EU should accelerate efforts to reach decisions on applications for approval of biotech products for food, feed and cultivation within the timelines established by EU law.

The EU should stand behind its approval system by making unequivocal statements about the safety and effectiveness of biotech crops that have been thoroughly reviewed by its own regulatory bodies. EU member states should lift their bans on biotech products for which safety has been well-established by scientifically-based risk assessments.

EU member states should work quickly to find a practical solution to address low levels of biotech products approved in the exporting country but not in the importing country. Such a measure would encourage developing countries to take full advantage of technologies that will help them address the food price crisis without fear of losing their European

customers.

6. Further background can be obtained at
<http://eb.state.gov/shortcut.cfm/49AY>.

7. Minimize considered.

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