



## COMPENDIUM OF CANADA'S ENGAGEMENT IN INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL AGREEMENTS AND INSTRUMENTS

### *Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety*

**SUBJECT CATEGORY:**

Biodiversity / Ecosystems

**TYPE OF AGREEMENT / INSTRUMENT:**

Multilateral

**FORM:**

Legally-binding treaty

**STATUS:**

- **Canada has not ratified this agreement and therefore it is not in force in Canada.**
- Signed by Canada in April 19, 2001
- In force internationally since September 11, 2003

**LEAD & PARTNER DEPARTMENTS:**

**Lead:** Environment and Climate Change Canada.

**Partners:** Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada; Canadian Food Inspection Agency; Canadian Grain Commission; Fisheries and Oceans Canada; Global Affairs Canada and Natural Resources Canada.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:****Web Links:**

- [Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety](#) home page
- [Text of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety](#)
- [Canada's Country Profile](#)

**Contacts:**

[ECCC Inquiry Centre](#)

**COMPENDIUM EDITION:**

October 2018

**PLAIN LANGUAGE SUMMARY**

The Cartagena Protocol is an international agreement managing the movement of living modified organisms from one country to another. It aims to protect nature from the potential risks posed by such organisms by establishing procedures countries can use to make informed decisions on the import of such organisms.

While Canada has not signed this protocol, we do take the potential risk to nature such organisms can pose seriously. Canada has strong rules around assessing the risk of these organisms to the Canadian environment.

**OBJECTIVE**

The objective of the Cartagena Protocol is to contribute to ensuring an adequate level of protection in the field of the safe transfer, handling and use of living modified organisms (LMOs) resulting from modern biotechnology that may have adverse effects on the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity, taking also into account risks to human health, and specifically focusing on transboundary movements.

**KEY ELEMENTS**

- According to the Protocol, LMOs are those living organisms that possess a novel combination of genetic material and are obtained through the use of modern biotechnology.
- The main requirements of the Cartagena Protocol are related to ensuring that a party has the opportunity to make an informed decision regarding the potential impact that a LMO could have on its biodiversity, prior to deciding whether to allow that LMO to be imported.
- The [Biosafety Clearing-House](#) was established by the Cartagena Protocol to facilitate the exchange of scientific, technical, environmental and legal information on, and experience with, LMOs and to assist Parties to implement the Protocol.
- The Cartagena Protocol is reinforced by the [Nagoya - Kuala Lumpur Supplementary Protocol on Liability and Redress](#), which includes specific response measures to be taken in the event of damage to biodiversity resulting from LMOs. Adopted on 15

October 2010, the Supplementary Protocol has not entered into force. As a non-Party to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety, Canada cannot become a Party to this Supplementary Protocol.

## EXPECTED RESULTS

The Protocol's [Strategic Plan](#) was adopted in 2012 with focus on the following five strategic objectives: (1) to put in place necessary guidance to make the Protocol fully operational; (2) to develop Parties' capacity for implementation; (3) to improve the status of biodiversity; (4) to enhance benefits from ecosystem services; and (5) to enhance implementation through participatory planning, knowledge management and capacity building.

## CANADA'S INVOLVEMENT

Canada supports the environmental objectives of the Biosafety Protocol and signed the agreement in April 2001. However, Canada has not ratified the Protocol because of concerns with its lack of clarity and predictability in terms of its implementation and enforcement.

Canada has a strong regulatory framework for biosafety risk assessment that involves regulating products with novel traits. Living modified organisms are regulated under the Plant Protection Act and the Seeds Act (living

modified plants), the Canadian Environmental Protection Act 1999 (living modified animals), the Fisheries Act (for aquatic organisms) and the Health of Animals Act (veterinary biologics).

## RESULTS / PROGRESS

### *Activities*

The [Ninth Meeting of the Parties \(MOP9\)](#) was held in December 2016 in conjunction with the [Fourteenth Conference of the Parties of the Convention on Biological Diversity \(COP14\)](#) in Sharm el Sheikh, Egypt.

Although not a Party to the Protocol, Canada is an active participant in Protocol discussions and advocates for clarity on important provisions so that it may be implemented in a practical, science-based and effective manner that does not have an unduly negative impact on agricultural trade.