

Subject: CBD Online Forum Update

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Date: 7/7/2017 11:39 AM

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Hi all,

There continues to be a high-volume of activity on the forum, with many raising concerns about horizontal gene transfer and the ecological effects of deployment of synthetic biotech, and with the first explicit mention of gene drive.

Points you may wish to address:

1. Edward Hammond, Third World Network: <https://bch.cbd.int/synbio/open-ended/discussion/?threadid=8384#8431>
 - o He questions whether appropriate facilities and expertise for safe containment are in place in many developing countries. Although his concerns focus on one project in particular, they can be applied more broadly to the entire gene drive research community.
 - o **Please note that a sub-group is currently drafting a response outlining some of the containment procedures used, and clarifying which are appropriate to which types of projects and what the risks involved are.**

Suggested Actions:

1. As much of the discussion up to this point has focused on the unknown dangers and potential negative consequences of gene drive for ecosystems and biodiversity, it may be good for **those working in conservation (particularly those affiliated with Island Conservation) to provide some comments related to the moderator's request to "capture positive impacts of synbio organisms on biodiversity"**, which can be found in the following comment: <https://bch.cbd.int/synbio/open-ended/discussion/?threadid=8365#8442>

Summary of new developments: so far in the discussions, gene drive has mostly come up in the context of hypothetical deleterious effects on ecosystems. In response to this, some participants (e.g. <https://bch.cbd.int/synbio/open-ended/discussion/?threadid=8384#8410>) have asked that discussions be limited to concrete examples and specific situations and problems, avoiding sweeping and vague generalizations. This may be a useful message to pick up on. Sub-groups have also been mobilized to address concerns about the likelihood of horizontal gene transfer, and to clarify that vector control strategies (even those making use of synthetic biology) do not intend to cause the extinction of vector organisms, only to reduce their numbers. With regards to general tenor, the discussions have tended to placed more emphasis on the risks and unknowns associated with novel uses of synthetic biology, although several members of this group have attempted to redress this balance.

Regards,
Ben



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CBD Online Forum on Synthetic Biology will take place soon! Experts should [register online](#) to participate. Contact us if you require assistance. Supporter of the Manyinga orphan schools project – find out more at www.manyinga.org

