



# IGTC

International Grain Trade Coalition

## **International Grain Trade Coalition Guidance for Communication and Information-Sharing on Plant Breeding Innovation (Gene-Editing) Technology**

### **Introduction**

The IGTC's overarching objective is to achieve a market and regulatory environment supportive of trade that avoids disruptions in the international trade of grain, oilseeds, pulses and derived products.

The commercial introduction of new seed varieties of grains, oilseeds, pulses and agri-bulks produced through plant breeding innovation, such as gene-editing technology, has the potential to provide food and industrial products with improved characteristics (e.g., nutritional, health and other attributes) and output traits that can be grown in a more environmentally sustainable way, thereby further enhancing global food security.

However, the commercialization of traits produced using plant breeding innovation also has the potential to disrupt global trade and adversely affect the entire value chain.

The successful introduction of the products of plant breeding innovation into the global marketplace will depend not only on the adoption of internationally-aligned policy and regulatory approaches by governments, but also on consumer acceptance, which will manifest itself in the purchasing decisions of upstream customers including food manufacturers and retailers.

For these reasons, successful commercial introduction of commodities and products developed through plant breeding innovation requires transparency, advance consultation, ongoing dialogue and information-sharing between and among:

- Breeding and seed companies, as well as other entities engaged in developing and commercializing such traits (including academic institutions and public research entities);
- Agricultural producers;
- Grain and oilseed handlers and processors;
- Exporters;
- Importers; and
- Food and feed manufacturers and processors.

Information about the development and commercialization of the products of plant breeding innovation may be available from various domestic and international sources. However, the plant breeders, seed companies and other innovators are in

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the best position to provide accurate, timely and authoritative information to the remainder of the value chain. Early sharing of this information is essential to help value chain partners identify and mitigate any risks associated with the marketability and consumer acceptance of new products to avert trade disruption.

To advance this information-sharing, the International Grain Trade Coalition (IGTC) has collaborated with the International Seed Federation (ISF) to develop interrelated and complementary guidance for their respective members to encourage an open, early, constructive and ongoing two-way exchange of information on plant breeding innovation. IGTC believes those developing plant breeding innovation techniques play an important role in initiating such discussions in with the remainder of the value chain since they are in the best position to know the pipeline and commercialization time frame of their products. However, IGTC also encourages its members to reciprocate by initiating contacts with breeding and seed companies and other entities developing such traits within their respective geographic areas to encourage and foster this important and necessary consultation. IGTC members also are encouraged to maintain ongoing dialogue with governmental, consumer, and the food and feed sectors, in collaboration with product developers whenever possible.

## **Objectives**

- 1.** Establish an ongoing, regular information-sharing dialogue between IGTC members and plant breeders, seed companies and other innovators (including academic institutions and public research entities) engaged in developing and commercializing the products of plant breeding innovation at the international, national and regional levels.
- 2.** Identify and take advantage of opportunities for IGTC and ISF members to formulate joint messaging and jointly engage with national governments, as appropriate, to encourage prudent and internationally aligned approaches for pre-market approval and oversight of crops produced through plant breeding innovation.
- 3.** Identify and follow through on information-sharing opportunities for IGTC and ISF members to engage jointly with national and regional consumer groups and food and feed manufacturers and processors to identify information needs and foster consumer acceptance.
- 4.** Encourage dialogue on specific information-sharing topics, as outlined in the Annex to this document.

### **1. Frequency of Information-Sharing**

- **Initial Consultation:** It is advisable that information-sharing dialogue be initiated as early as possible during the pre-market development of such traits, and well in advance of the anticipated commercial product launch.

- **Subsequent Consultation:** It is recommended that follow up, ongoing consultations occur as developments warrant, but typically this would be not be less than annually.

## **2. Opportunities for Joint Collaboration:**

- Identify and follow-through on opportunities to engage jointly with national governments, as appropriate, to encourage prudent and globally aligned approaches to science- and risk-based pre-market approval and oversight of crops produced through plant breeding innovation.
- Identify opportunities, as appropriate, to jointly discuss plant breeding innovation at the national and regional levels with consumer groups and food and feed manufacturers and processors to identify information needs and foster consumer acceptance.
- In this regard, IGTC and ISF have developed joint messaging to be shared with members of both organizations as a possible template for such purposes.

## **3. Facilitation of Information-Sharing Between IGTC and ISF**

IGTC members, as well as other relevant organizations and companies with which they have working relationships (e.g., member companies, affiliated associations and/or other organizations) are encouraged to convey information obtained during national and regional information-sharing exchanges in a timely manner with the IGTC Secretariat. This will assist IGTC in facilitating continued robust, ongoing discussions with ISF, as well as enable IGTC to share information with the grain trade globally.

## **ANNEX**

### **Suggested Information-Sharing Topics for Discussion with Plant Breeders and Seed Companies**

This Annex provides IGTC members with potential topics and questions that may be relevant for discussion during information-sharing meetings with plant breeders, seed companies and other innovators. IGTC recognizes that information-sharing needs will vary based upon the specific crop, food or feed product, extent of commercialization, degree of governmental oversight and other factors. Therefore, this Appendix is designed to serve as a template and starting point for IGTC members in determining the kind of information most relevant for their specific circumstances. IGTC members are encouraged to summarize and share relevant information gathered through such discussions with the IGTC Secretariat for dissemination to other IGTC members in furtherance of IGTC's overarching objective of achieving a trade-supportive market and regulatory environment that avoids disruptions in the international trade of grain, oilseeds, pulses and derived products.

### **Potential Topics for Discussion**

General Information:

- The general status of plant breeding innovation in use by the seed company or plant breeder, e.g., what are the latest breeding methods being used or explored, in which types of crops, for what type of breeding objectives?
- The general status of domestic and international marketability issues related to plant breeding innovation e.g., the types of information trading partners, importers, grain buyers or other downstream customers are requesting.
- Identify principal points of contact to maintain ongoing information-sharing, and discuss frequency of ongoing exchanges that may be needed.

For specific products in the commercialization pipeline:

- The nomenclature used to identify the product, such as a specific name, trait name, or variety name, as well as the resulting grain or oilseed commodity intended to be commercialized.
- The breeding objective, and, if applicable, potential impacts of the trait on the nutritional, compositional or functional characteristics of the commodity and resulting impact(s) on downstream processes and users of the commodity (e.g., changes in nutritional content, processing quality or compositional changes of food and/or feed).
- The projected timeline for commercialization of seed.
- The breeding method used, and information about export market requirements for products developed in this way, if any.
- Whether the product is only intended to be cultivated and used domestically or if it is intended to be exported.

- The measures being taken to comply with required domestic or international governmental approvals or authorizations, if any, prior to commercialization.
- The anticipated timeline for obtaining pre-market approvals (if required) in importing countries for commodities produced from the seed trait, with periodic updates as warranted.
- The status of any post-market governmental review or requirements that could affect the marketability and free-flow of grain and oilseed commodities (e.g. labeling, certification, notification requirements, MRLs, etc.)
- Plans for implementing process-management systems (e.g., stewardship, closed-loop or identity-preservation) for commodities produced from the seed trait, if applicable, to address specific marketability requirements and regulatory conditions, or to capture the value of products with functionally different output traits.
- Any commercial assurances being provided in the event the product becomes present in the commingled commodity stream and results in disruptions of domestic or global trade.
- Analytical methods, if any, which may be available for detecting the presence of the product under discussion.