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Report Highlights:

Slovakia maintains a scientific approach towards biotechnology. No major policy or legislative changes are foreseen.

Executive Summary:

Slovakia is one of few European countries open towards Biotechnology. Genetically engineered plants are generally considered to increase agricultural productivity and sustainability. The Slovak Ministry of Agriculture strictly regulates the use of biotechnology; nonetheless its scientific approach has supported the use of BT corn for biogas production and animal feed. Slovakia has been one of a few EU member states to allow and to conduct field trials of various bioengineered events. Also a recently ran survey on public awareness on matters relating to the safe transport and use of living genetically modified organisms will provide information on the use of biotechnology and options for the future in both production and marketing.

General Information:**Biotechnology Trade and Production:**

Slovakia, as well as the Czech Republic, remains one of a few EU member states with a science-based approach to biotechnology. Slovak farmers have been growing BT corn MON810 since 2006. They use it mainly for biogas production and for on-farm cattle feed, eliminating the need for commercial marketing of the product.

Acreage of GE Crops in Slovakia										
	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012 (estimate)
BT corn MON 810	0	0	0	30	930	1,930	875	1,249	760	378

I. Crops under Development

There are currently no bioengineered crops under development in Slovakia.

II. Trade

Slovakia imports bioengineered soybean meal, a main protein source for feed mixes. The majority of imports are trans-shipped through main European ports. In 2011, Slovakia imported 112,000 MT of soybean meal.

III. Food Aid

Slovakia, not being a food aid recipient, consequently faces no issues related to biotechnology that would impede the importation of food aid donations.

Biotechnology Policy:**I. Responsible Government Ministries**

The Ministry of Environment of the Slovak Republic (MoE) is the national competent authority for the implementation of the GMO Act. MoE issues permits for contained use of GMOs, and permits for the release of GMOs into the environment for trial purposes. MoE receives applications for placing on the market, which are then reviewed and approved or rejected in collaboration with other EU member states

and institutions of the European Union.

The Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) and MoE both provide scientific advice in support of sound decision-making processes regarding adoption and cultivation of GMOs:

- MoE established the *Biosafety Committee and its Panel of Experts* on the basis of the Act No.151/2002 Coll., art. 27. The Committee is formed by eleven permanent members and fifteen experts. Administration of the Committee is under the MoE's Department of Biosafety. The Committee produces recommendations on request for MoE. The recommendations are made based on its members' specific areas of expertise. The relevant documents and results of Committee activities are published on the MoE [website](#).
- MoA, through its Department for Food Safety and Nutrition (DFSN), established the *National Advisory Experts Group in the field of GMOs and New Foodstuffs*. The Group is composed of 43 experts from a wide range of disciplines relevant to the field of GM food safety and is cooperating internationally. Administration of the group is carried out by DFSN. Members of the expert group communicate regularly with each other and with others in their field of specific expertise.

II. Other relevant ministries and organizations for biosafety in Slovakia include:

Ministries

- The Ministry of Health (MoH): is the competent authority for medicines produced from GMOs and for using GMOs in the area of public feeding. MoH is represented on MoE's Biosafety committee. It is an official partner to DG SANCO (Directorate General for Health and Consumer Affairs) of the European Commission. It is the competent authority to the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC, 1972)
- The Ministry of Education (MoEd): is the umbrella organization for education, research and science, including the Slovak Academy of Sciences.
- The Slovak Academy of Sciences (SAS): is the main participant for research in biosafety.
- The Ministry of Economy (MoEc): is the competent authority for biotechnologies use, as well as the import and export of products and production of bio-fuels.

Inspectorates

- The Slovak Environment Inspection (SEI), Department of Biosafety: is the inspection body that controls compliance with the Act and Decree on the use of genetic techniques and genetically modified organisms, laid down in legal regulations and duties resulting from the decisions issued by the Ministry of Environment. For analytical services, SEI collaborates with the Institute of Molecular Biology SAS, which serves as a reference laboratory for MoE and SEI.
- The State Veterinary and Food Administration (SVFA): executes, among other things, the control of import, production, manipulation, handling, and marketing of genetically modified food and feed.
- The Central Control and Testing Institute of Agriculture (CCTIA): is responsible, among other things, for the control of manipulation with the genetically modified seeds and their planting. The last two mentioned authorities have DNA laboratories serving as reference laboratories for MoA.

International Organizations:

- *European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) contact point:* The European Food Safety Authority

(hereinafter EFSA) has been established in accordance with the Regulation (EC) of the European Parliament and Council No. 178/2002/EC laying down the general principles and requirements of food law, establishing the European Food Safety Authority, and laying down procedures in matters of food safety. The main activity of EFSA is to deal with scientific risk assessment and risk communication. Under this Regulation, member states are required to cooperate with EFSA.

In Slovakia the national competent authority for cooperation with the EFSA is the Ministry of Agriculture, according to the Act No. 152/1995 Coll. as amended. Annex 5 gives further details about the functioning of the EFSA focal point.

- *Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety to the Convention of Biological Diversity national contacts:* Slovakia was the presidency country of the 4th Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity during the time when in Cartagena, Vienna and Montreal the text of the Cartagena Protocol was negotiated and finally adopted. As a Party to the Protocol, the necessary duties are fulfilled consistently in Slovakia: The Government established a National Focal Point to the Protocol and a National Contact Point for trans-boundary movement of Living Modified Organisms (LMOs) information in the Department of Biosafety of MoE, a fully interoperable biosafety clearinghouse (BCH) [website](#) along with the nomination of National BCH focal point. The Act No. 151/2002 Coll., article 24, establishes the competencies of MoE to the Cartagena Protocol.
- *Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and national contacts to Codex Alimentarius:* The competent authority of the Slovak Republic for cooperation with FAO is the Ministry of Agriculture together with the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic.
- *Sanitary and Phyto-Sanitary measures (SPS):* The Central Control and Testing Institute for Agriculture is the contact institute for SPS matters in Slovakia.
- *World Organization for Animal Health (OIE):* The Director of the State Veterinary and Food Authority of the Slovak republic regularly attend the meetings of OIE. Animal health is the matter of the Act on Veterinary Care No. 39/2007 Coll. as amended by act No. 99/2008 Coll.

III. *Biotech Policy*

Slovak policy on biotechnology is rational and science based, applying a case-by-case approval principle. The Slovak positions for negotiations on approvals of GM products in the EU are prepared by MoE in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture of the Slovak Republic (MoA), which is the competent authority for food and feed made from GMOs and for cultivation of GM agricultural plants, placed on the EU market.

The MoE issues permits for contained use of GMOs in Risk Classes 2 – 4 and receives the notifications of the gene technologies or GMOs using in the Risk Class 1 that can be submitted after use has started. The MoE can ask the Slovak Biosafety Committee for an expert opinion on a particular notification. Dealing with applications for the Risk Classes 2 to 4, the MoE always asks an expert statement, which is then discussed at the Slovak Biosafety Committee meeting prior to issuing the permit. The regulations for GMOs in Slovakia are based on the EU regulatory framework. The national legislation has been harmonized.

IV. *Approved Biotech Crops, Food and Feed*

For information regarding bioengineered crops approved for cultivation, food or feed use, please refer

to EU-27 2012 Biotechnology Annual Report.

V. *Field Trials*

Slovakia has been one of a few EU member states to allow and to conduct field trials of various bioengineered events. Deliberate release for field testing in Slovakia was authorized for several events of corn with various modifications including pest and herbicide resistance and changed nutritional characteristics (increased content of mannose), and for sugar beet tolerant to herbicide products containing glyphosate.

VI. *Coexistence*

The rules for coexistence in Slovakia are laid down in the act No. 184/2006 Coll. that sets the obligation to the farmers to announce to other farmers within the radius of minimal isolation distance of his intent to cultivate genetically modified plants. The Decree No. 69/2007 sets the isolation distances as follows:

Crop / Distance in meters	Corn	Rapeseed	Sugar Beets	Potatoes
Conventional Agriculture	200	400	50	20
Organic Agriculture	300	600	50	20

A two meters isolation distance must be replaced by a buffer zone consisting of one row of corn (for corn) or by one meter of sugar beets (for sugar beets).

VII. *Labeling*

Packaged foods and feeds derived and/or containing biotechnology enhanced ingredients must be labeled. “Contains GMOs” is a typical example of a product label statement found on the Slovak market. Labeling is enforced by local authorities and follows EU labeling standards. For more information on EU biotechnology labeling requirements see the EU-27 2012 Biotechnology Annual Report.

Marketing:

III. *Market acceptance*

Farmers are facing difficulties with regards to the marketing of BT corn therefore the primarily use for this crop is on-farm as a livestock feed or for Biogas production. However some retail buyers of meat and milk products are requiring farmers to guarantee that their livestock are not fed with GMOs.

IX. *County specific studies*

While conducting this report, the Ministry of Environment of the Slovak Republic is running a survey of public awareness on matters relating to the safe transport and use of living genetically modified organisms in the context of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety. The goal of this survey is to assess public knowledge and awareness of biotechnology. The questionnaire has been prepared in accordance with the operational objective 2.1 of the work program for the period 2011-2015 in awareness, education and public participation, adopted by the parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety in the decision BS-V/13. It is expected that the results of this survey will give a better understanding of public awareness on biotechnology and will provide information on the use of biotechnology and options for both future production and marketing.

The European Commission document released in April 2011 on the Socio-economic implications of GMO cultivation shows Slovak contribution only for the “General Comments” section as follows:

- The exercise of data collection is considered important by the authorities.
- Difficulties to answer due to the limited experience of Slovakia with GMO cultivation.
- No study on socio-economic impact has been performed so far. However, two impacting elements could already be identified:
 - Obligation for labeling generates more expenses for each product produced from GMOs, and the consumers will not buy the product.
 - Some processing companies have very low adventitious presence thresholds (0.02%), so conventional producers near to GMOs fields have problems to sell.

Further information on Slovak perception of biotechnology and GMOs can be found in the EU-wide survey “Special Euro barometer 341/ Wave 73.1 - TNS Opinion & Social: Biotechnology Report 2010.” For more details please review the survey linked here.

XI. Capacity Building and Outreach:

The FAS outreach strategy in Slovakia remains supporting the rational approach towards biotechnologies by providing unbiased and science based information to the decision makers.

Author Defined:

Animal Biotechnology:

Genetically engineered animals are regulated in the same way as any other genetically engineered organisms in Slovakia. The main legislative act for that area is the Act No. 151/2002 Coll. on the Use of Genetic Technologies and Genetically Modified Organisms that came into force from April 1, 2002. The Act was amended by the Acts No. 587/2004 Coll., No. 77/2005 Coll., No. 100/2008 Coll., and Act no. 117/2010 Coll. The use of genetically engineered animals in food and feed is regulated by different legislative acts – for food it is a part of the Food Codex dedicated to novel foods, the feed area falls under responsibilities of the Ministry of Agriculture.

Projects using GE animals that have been authorized in Slovakia so far fall under the scope of contained use. No commercial applications approved for GE animals for food or feed use, and no notification of the use of GE animals for food use or other agricultural use has been filed with the EU. Some GE animals or products are used for limited medical and pharmaceutical research purposes, most of them are transgenic rodents.

Other Relevant Information:

For further information about the situation and regulatory framework for biotechnology in the EU please see a website dedicated to biotechnologies by the Foreign Agricultural Service U.S. Mission to the European Union based in Brussels or search the FAS reports.

For information on GMOs and biotechnology pertaining to Slovakia please refer to a website provided by the Biosafety Department of the Ministry of Environment of the Slovak Republic. Information from this website is used for this report.