



Republic of the Philippines

DEPARTMENT OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

16 August 2016

DR. PATRICIA B. LICUANAN

Chairperson

Commission on Higher Education

Higher Education Development Center (HEDC) Building

C.P. Garcia Avenue, UP Campus, Diliman, Quezon City 1101

Dear *Dr. Licuanan*:

This pertains to Executive Order No. 514: "Establishing the National Biosafety Framework, Prescribing Guidelines for its Implementation, Strengthening the National Committee on Biosafety of the Philippines and For Other Purposes", issued on 17 March 2006.

The National Committee on Biosafety of the Philippines (NCBP) per EO 514 is the lead body mandated to coordinate and harmonize inter-agency and multi-sector efforts to develop biosafety policies in the country and set scientific, technical and procedural standards on actions by agencies and other sectors to promote biosafety in the Philippines. It also acts as a clearing-house for biosafety matters and ensures that the country's obligations are fulfilled as party to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety under the Convention on Biological Diversity.

The NCBP, which is chaired by the undersigned is multi-sectoral body composed of the Secretaries of the Departments of Agriculture (DA), Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), Health (DOH) Foreign Affairs (DFA), Trade and Industry (DTI) and Interior and Local Government (DILG) with five scientist members and representatives from the industry, consumer and community.

Based on CHED Memorandum Order No. 20, Series of 2013 (General Education Curriculum: Holistic Understandings, Intellectual and Civic Competencies), it has come to our attention that biotechnology including genetic engineering is one of the suggested topics on current issues under the GE Core Course "Science, Technology and Society" (3 units). In this regard, we would like to recommend to CHED the inclusion in the curricula of higher academic institutions, topics on modern biotechnology jointly with the Philippine biosafety regulatory system on genetically modified organisms (GMOs) and the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety, the treaty governing the transboundary movement of GMOs, to which the country is a signatory.

Recognizing the fast-paced developments and breakthroughs in the field of modern biotechnology, the potential risks to the environment, human and animal health associated with its application has always been a concern by the public. In this connection, we deem it fitting that Filipino citizens, especially at a very young age, should be informed that there exists a functional and efficient regulatory system that address the issues on modern biotechnology. Furthermore, we believe that public awareness and understanding of the issues and how these are being addressed by the government are crucial in the acceptance of any technology.

We hope that CHED can serve as one of our partners in the effective dissemination of information on the country's existing regulations governing the safe and responsible use of modern biotechnology. Should you have questions, feel free to contact Ms. Julieta Fe L. Estacio, Head Secretariat of the NCBP at tel. no. (02) 837-2943 or e-mail ncbpsecretariat@dost.gov.ph. We would be happy to meet with you and/or your designated officials for a briefing on the biosafety regulatory system as well as the ongoing biosafety-related initiatives in the country. Attached, for your guidance, are pertinent materials on the Philippine biosafety regulatory system.

Thank you.

Very truly yours,

FORTUNATO T. DE LA PEÑA

Secretary, DOST

and Chairman, National Committee on Biosafety of the Philippines

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