

Workshop Resolutions and Recommendations

International Workshop for Islamic Scholars & Experts of Modern Biotechnology “Agribiotechnology: Shariah Compliance

**1-2 December, 2010
Penang, Malaysia.**

The world population has almost tripled since 1960 and the percentage of undernourished people has also increased steadily. Besides being net importers of food and agricultural products, Muslim countries [members of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC)] are mostly least developed countries, characterized by rampant hunger and extreme poverty whereby close to 2.7 billion poor people spend 80% of their income on food. Food availability and accessibility for the Muslims should therefore be addressed to identify strategies to solve this problem in the midst of increased population, food and energy demand, decreasing food production resources and climate change.

Crops developed through modern methods of plant breeding termed as biotechnology (biotech) or genetically modified (GM) crops such as soybean, corn, canola and cotton with improved quality and quantity traits available in the market (biotic stress and herbicide tolerance) have been accepted and being cultivated globally in 25 countries (in 2009) and are being used as food and feed in a majority of other countries. The efforts for improvement of crop plants with tolerance to abiotic stresses such as drought and salinity (which are more relevant to the needs of OIC countries) are also ongoing. Records show that almost all members of the OIC have been importing these commodities from the large GM crop producing countries. In continuing promotion of global acceptance of biotech crops, OIC Members and Islamic scholars should be aware of genetic modification, GM crops and their benefits to accept the biotech agricultural products as Halal for the society.

With a focus on alleviating the existing food problems and poverty, the International Workshop of Islamic Scholars and Experts in Modern Biotechnology on “Agri-biotechnology: Shariah Compliance” held in Penang, Malaysia on 1-2 December 2010, agreed upon the following resolutions:

1. Islam and science are complementary and Islam supports beneficial scientific innovations for mankind. Modern biotechnology and genetic engineering are important developments that merit promotion in all OIC Members. Regulatory measures should facilitate the acceptance and use of GM products particularly by Muslims. Genetic modification and GM products are Halal as long as the sources from which they originate are Halal. The only Haram cases are limited to products derived from Haram origin retaining their original characteristics that are not substantially changed.
2. Modern biotechnology and genetic engineering are methods of plant improvement and intrinsically are not different from other plant improvement techniques from the shariah point of view.

3. In ensuring food security, our Islamic obligations require us to urge all Muslim countries, governments, international organizations and research institutions, to support research and development and use of modern biotechnology, genetic engineering and their products.
4. Because of their positive impacts on agriculture and the urgency of food security for Muslim Ummah, promotion of modern biotechnology and genetic engineering are considered "Fardhu Kifayah" (collective obligation) and should not be neglected from the shariah point of view.
5. Public awareness and education on modern biotechnology and genetic engineering, demand continuous interaction between the Islamic scholars, scientists and the general public.
6. Transparent and complete scientific information should be available for the interested stakeholders for informed decision making.