

# **Guidance on risk assessment of gene drive organisms under the UN Convention on Biological Diversity: work accomplished to date and next steps**

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## **Abstract**

The UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and its attendant Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety are the foremost international policymaking fora where gene drives are currently being discussed. Although these discussions have been going on for years, the UN Biodiversity Conference in December 2022 saw a significant development in that Parties agreed to develop new guidance materials to inform risk assessments of gene drive organisms. This presentation will give participants an overview of the work done under the CBD to date to determine if gene drives should be a priority consideration for risk assessment under the Protocol, as well as the next steps for developing the new guidance over the next two years. It will lay out the implications of the CBD's decision for the future of gene drive research and contextualize it in regard to the work of other international bodies that are considering questions of gene drive governance (such as the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture), as well as how it fits in with risk assessment processes and guidance that currently exist. It will outline how interested stakeholders can get involved in the work of the CBD, through multilateral deliberation processes such as the workstreams dedicated Online Forum. And it will seek to give participants an idea of the likely outcomes of the CBD's work on gene drives and how they will inform synthetic biology research and risk assessment and management through 2024 and beyond.

**Key words:** risk assessment, gene drive, governance