



## 2015 Annual Report

The mission of the International Society for Biosafety Research, ISBR, is to promote the practice and application of science in the fields of agricultural biotechnology and environmental risk analysis.

ISBR aims to promote scientifically sound research that supports biosafety assessment by improving communication among scientists who study plants, animals, and microbes with new characteristics due to altered DNA and produced using modern biotechnology. Our members are international in scope and include researchers from academia, government bodies and technology developers, as well as risk assessors and regulators. Some are promoters of GM technologies; others are more neutral on this topic or even skeptical. However, we share a demand for solid scientific data with which to conduct our deliberations.

ISBR activities are intended to be as broadly interdisciplinary as possible, covering the entire spectrum of pertinent research, from strictly molecular laboratory studies to field studies to socioeconomic aspects of field deployment of GMOs.

By fostering communication and technical exchange among experts, ISBR supports the development of the science used in biosafety assessment processes and promotes constructive dialogue on important science-based biosafety issues associated with GMOs.

## Letter from the President

What follows is a brief report on the activities of ISBR during the past year seen through the purview of its main operating committees. The first of the two years between ISBGMOs is typically concerned with seeing what we can learn from the most recent one (ISBGMO 13 in Cape Town), ensuring that the new science we heard there is made available to a wider audience through publication, and the planning of the next one (ISBGMO 14). You will see from this report that these activities are well underway. Publication of ten papers based on talks given at ISBGMO 13 is almost complete and, thanks to a generous grant from CropLife International, are available to download free of charge as open access articles. We have incorporated a number of lessons learned in Cape Town into the planning for ISBGMO 14 and an outline of the scientific program is given in the report from the Symposium and Program committees. This year will see the detailed planning gathering pace to ensure that the high standards of these superb bi-annual conferences are upheld. I am excitedly looking forward to welcoming as many delegates as possible to this meeting in 2017.

In the meantime, the everyday business of the Society continues and I recommend you read the Committee reports to see how ISBR has been working on improving our administrative structure, our means of communicating with and involving members, and generally thinking of ways in which, especially during the inter-ISBGMO years, we can add value to what we offer to our membership. I have realized since becoming President that one of the Society's major challenges is to retain the interest of members in those inter-meeting years and to ensure that members feel that we can provide them with something of interest and value in the field of biosafety research outside of those times. Relatively small and widely scattered as it is, we don't want ISBR to become like Bishop Berkley's tree, jumping in and out of existence depending on whether it is perceived or not (an analogy with apology to students of philosophy). I can only assure you that the Board, our executive staff (of one, thank you, Jackie), our Treasurer and the Chairs and members of standing committees are working hard on your behalf to make sure that we have a viable and active Society in good financial health and with much to offer its membership. I am personally very grateful for the efforts of these people during the past year and delighted to record that gratitude here.

Professor Alan Gray, President



## ISBR Committee Reports

### Membership Committee

As a not for profit science organization, the International Society for Biosafety Research relies on the investment of time and resources by the membership for its growth and development. This year it was the goal of the Membership Committee to develop practices that are focused on better serving our members and to initiate interest from new members. ISBR launched a new structure that provides three options for membership; individual, institutional, and sustaining. The individual membership is ISBR's original model that offers a personal membership with the traditional voting power, eligibility to take a leadership role, and member only pricing for participating in ISBR events. The institutional membership is new this year and is designed for organizations that desire membership that enables their staff to take part in ISBR activities. With this membership each organization will have one contact person that is awarded full individual member benefits, along with the option for up to three additional delegates to take advantage of member only pricing for the ISBGMO conference and any affiliated ISBR events. The final option for membership is for organizations that are willing to offer the society additional financial support, while also enabling their staff to take part in ISBR activities through the sustaining membership. Under this model, each organization will have one contact person that is awarded full individual member benefits, along with the option for up to ten additional delegates to take advantage of member only pricing for the ISBGMO conference and any additional ISBR events. Both institutional and sustaining memberships provide the members within these categories use of logos, taglines, and access to unique sponsorship opportunities. By offering these choices, as well as the opportunity to join for either one or two years, we hope to broaden ISBR's appeal to others in the scientific community interested in biosafety research – effectively making it easier to join the Society!



Next up for the ISBR Membership Committee is to both improve and make better use of our membership database. We are migrating our old database to a new platform called ConstantContact, a software program that we can use to help manage our contacts, send attractive newsletters and emails, and review metrics around open- and click-through rates. These tools will improve the professionalism and effectiveness of outreach efforts. The Membership Committee also plans to establish a "roster of experts" that would be located in the Member's only section of the ISBR website. The idea is to provide a bulletin board for members who wish to share their contact information, areas of expertise, highlight research projects and publications, and seek collaborators or information from the membership. Participation will be voluntary, of course, but we really hope that ISBR's membership will take advantage of this new opportunity. We will be back in touch as soon as the bulletin board is set up.

### Communications & Outreach Committee



The ISBR Communications Committee continues to work diligently on preparing timely newsletters with relevant information for ISBR members. The goal of these newsletters is to provide updates on science and regulatory news that is happening globally. All ISBR members are encouraged to share information about their work, developments in their region, and timely research that is related to ISBR. The newsletters are dependent on contributions by members. Please contact [admin@isbr.info](mailto:admin@isbr.info) to contribute. Looking ahead in 2016, a new email software system will be deployed that will improve our communications efforts. Pertinent information related to the upcoming ISBGMO 14 and other communication materials will be shared in the months to come!

## Publications Committee

The bi-annual International Symposium on the Biosafety of Genetically Modified Organisms (ISBGMO) is the largest and most important international scientific conference related to the biosafety of GMOs and draws participants from government regulatory agencies, academic research departments, large and small private sector organizations and non-governmental organizations. It provides an opportunity for these participants to network, exchange information and listen to the latest theoretical and applied science that has relevance for biosafety and the regulation of genetically modified organisms. It is also the largest single activity organized by the International Society for Biosafety Research (ISBR), both in terms of number of participants as well as costs and revenues for the society.



In order to take full advantage of ISBGMO, and to provide value to the membership of ISBR, the ISBR Board decided prior to ISBGMO 12 that it would be advantageous to pursue a dedicated publication, in the form of a special issue of an appropriate existing peer reviewed journal, to serve as a platform for publishing the science presented at ISBGMO. This would serve as both an incentive to scientists to participate in the ISBGMO as well as a consolidated means of capturing the science presented there and making it available to ISBR members as well as the general public. For ISBGMO 12 an agreement was reached with the journal *Transgenic Research* to publish a special edition. Submissions were published online on a rolling basis following peer review, and the final edition was published with 12 articles in December 2014.

Prior to ISBGMO 13, the Board considered different options to provide the same opportunity to collect and consolidate resulting publications. After a deliberative process, an agreement was reached with the online publisher Frontiers to publish a Research Topic that would be a joint publication of two of the publisher's online journals: *Frontiers in Plant Science* and *Frontiers in Biotechnology and Bioengineering*. This mechanism offered several attractive features, including an sophisticated online submission and peer review forum as well as providing the opportunity for all the resulting publications to be open access. Once finalized, the Research Topic will be organized into a special electronic publication by Frontiers.

The call for abstracts, announced to participants prior to ISBGMO 13 in November, 2014, resulted in 17 submissions. Following the peer review and editing process, 10 articles have been accepted for publication in the Research Topic, with the first published in May, 2015 and the final two articles under proofing at the time of this writing (Dec. 2015). These articles are available online for download free of charge. The cost for publication of the articles has been covered by ISBR through a grant from CropLife International dedicated to supporting open access publications resulting from ISBGMO.

Article types in the Research Topic include original research, review, opinion and methods articles, and these cover ERA methodology, application of the ERA paradigm to new technologies, experiences with public communication and formal analysis of ERA methods. The full Research Topic can be accessed [here](#).

## Symposium and Program Committee - Joint Summary

The Scientific Program and Local Program Committees of renowned scientists in the field of GMO risk assessment have been working tirelessly over the last year to prepare for ISBGMO 14. This bi-annual event consists of three plenary sessions with twelve parallel sessions, a poster session and a pre-ISBGMO side meeting on specific topics. This design increases the level of detail and value of the content through the parallel sessions that offer more diversity on relevant topics. An important goal for the parallel sessions is to find a good balance between policy-oriented/conceptual talks and research talks, in which gathered data are presented. Utilizing a planning committee comprised of scientists from both the public and private sector, these professionals will assure the development of an ISBGMO program representative of both jurisdictions and a robust review of the most current issues related to environmental risk assessment of GMOs.

During the meeting, the experience gained from 30 years of GMO field trials and 20 years of GMO commercial deployment will be acknowledged to address important topics under this area of focus. Although much has been learned, it seems that the road to fully deploy these products of biotechnology is still long and complicated. The Symposium and Program Committee will address this issue by examining the past, discussing the present, and looking ahead to the future of this technology through many thought-provoking talks and stimulating discussions.

The Scientific Program and Program Committees will spend the next year finalizing and implanting the ISBGMO 14 program and look forward to sharing the details of this event as they become available.



## Financial Operations Report

The International Society for Biosafety Research is incorporated under the laws of the State of Delaware, USA. The Society supports international symposia, seminars, and conferences on biosafety issues; sponsors scientific publications in the field of biosafety research; and promotes a multi-disciplinary approach to ensuring the safety of GMO products through scientifically sound risk assessment that supports regulatory decision-making. Under this remit, the Society is qualified as a tax-exempt organization under Section 501(c)(3) of the US Internal Revenue Code; therefore, it is not subject to state or Federal taxes on income related to its exempt purposes. The Society is not aware of any potential risk to its tax-exempt status at this time.

Revenues in 2015 were significantly enhanced by the \$38,553 surplus generated from the very successful 13th International Symposium on the Biosafety of Genetically Modified Organisms (ISBGMO13) held in Cape Town, South Africa, in November 2014. Membership revenues in 2015 were \$3,246.50, consistent with historical averages, but reduced from \$4,200 realized in 2014, which was largely due to new memberships in conjunction with ISBGMO13.

Total expenditures in 2015 were \$16,642.64, comprised of administrative support and operating supplies (\$6,125.57; 36.8%), webhosting and telecommunications (\$4,492.07; 27%), and publications (\$6,025.00; 36.2%). The publications expenditures were supported through a grant from CropLife International to promote the open access dissemination by Frontiers of articles arising from ISBGMO13.

There were no extraordinary changes in net assets during 2015, and overall, the Society remains on a very sound financial footing.

Further details around the 2015 ISBR Financial Report can be found [here](#).

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