In the European Union, General Surveillance (GS) is a post-market environmental monitoring (PMEM) requirement designed to detect adverse effects unanticipated in the pre-market risk assessment of GMOs. EuropaBio, the European Association for Bioindustries, has coordinated different initiatives to develop workable and meaningful approaches to common elements of PMEM plans. One of these projects, performed by Perseus BVBA, was the development of a process for identifying and selecting existing monitoring networks that can provide useful information in the framework of PMEM.

A 4-step systematic approach was developed:

- Identification and inventarisation of existing monitoring networks.
- Specification of each network, based on set criteria to determine the relevance for PMEM. Criteria cover aspects of organization, monitoring subject, specificity, methodology, reporting and openness.
- Interaction with the network to inform on PMEM and establish an understanding on the use of the information.
- Analysis via periodical review of information leading to reporting of the results.

Overall 4 categories of networks were identified:

- Governmental networks: official initiatives focused on particular policy areas.
- Academic networks: provide platforms for scientific communications on particular projects or research.
- Trade networks: address specific professional issues;
- Environmental networks: educate, promote and collect information on observations of diverse components of nature.

Industry experienced that existing networks have to be integrated “as they are”. It would be difficult, if not counterproductive, to modify the practices of an existing network. Based on the information collected so far, the main roles of existing networks in GS could be:

- Confirming an adverse effect if it is suggested via other means (farmer questionnaire, literature, …).
- To act as a warning system.

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