Plantwise Policy on the International Transfer of Biological Specimens for Identification

Plantwise supports and facilitates the diagnosis of plant health problems and identification of causative agents (including invertebrate pests, pathogens and weeds). Plant doctors diagnose samples brought by farmers. However, problems unknown to plant doctors are referred to diagnostic service providers, preferably in-country diagnostic laboratories. If no suitable in-country diagnostic services are available, biological specimens may need to be sent to a laboratory outside the country. Plantwise will work with national partners and the relevant authorities to ensure compliance with all relevant national regulations, including those dealing with access and benefit-sharing (ABS) and sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) measures. Specifically, Plantwise partners should establish and maintain contact with, and follow the recommendations of concerned National Plant Protection Organisations (NPPOs), as well as the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD[1]) National Focal Points and the Competent National Authority on ABS.

The CBD established the sovereign rights of states over their natural resources. To meet one of its principal objectives, the CBD developed the Nagoya Protocol[2] to facilitate access to genetic resources and the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from their utilization (i.e. ABS). As this protocol is ratified, countries will enact legislation to provide regulations for ABS, which may be based on prior informed consent (PIC) and mutually agreed terms (MAT) documented in a material transfer agreement (MTA).

Biological specimens for identification are genetic resources, and therefore Plantwise and its partners will comply with ABS national regulations and procedures, including PIC, MAT and use of MTAs as may be specified. Where there is no specific legislation, Plantwise will comply with the spirit of the CBD, and make sure that relevant national authorities are aware of the need for international transfer of biological specimens for identification. Images and descriptions of specimens and symptoms do not include genetic material and may be freely exchanged.

Following diagnosis/identification, genetic resources may be destroyed or returned to the source country. However, if specimens are required for a reference collection, permission for deposit will be obtained, if not already permitted under the MTA. Subsequent transfer of biological specimens would only take place under a compliant MTA. Thus, Plantwise and its partners encourage transparency, retaining the link between country of origin and end user of genetic resources.

1. **http://www.cbd.int/** and the text: **http://www.cbd.int/convention/text**
2. **http://www.cbd.int/abs** and the text: **http://www.cbd.int/abs/text/default.shtml**