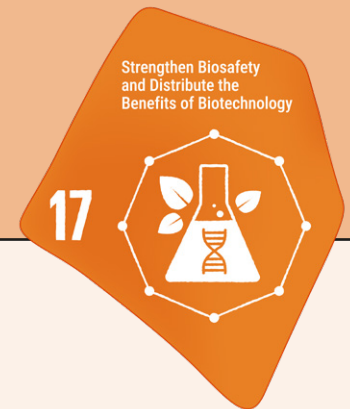


# Target 17:

## Strengthen Biosafety and Distribute the Benefits of Biotechnology



### WHY THIS MATTERS FOR INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

Genetically Modified Organisms can be harmful to Indigenous livelihoods. This target aims to avoid potential harms from GMOs by carefully testing and regulating them. It also seeks to make sure that results and benefits from GMOs are shared fairly and equitably.

Biosafety measures are rules and actions used to manage the risks of releasing genetically modified organisms (GMOs), plants or animals into nature. Genetic modification – also referred to as “biotechnology” – involves changing existing species to achieve desirable outcomes. For example, this might include changing a rice plant to make it better able to survive drought (potentially making it more resistant to climate change), or to make each plant produce more grains.

**When GMOs are released on or near Indigenous Peoples’ territories without adequate testing or protection, this can negatively affect traditional food systems.**

Releasing GMOs can have serious environmental, social and economic impacts, particularly when they are introduced without careful testing or proper use of the **precautionary principle**. Or, GMO seeds can spread beyond their original area of planting, thereby cross-pollinating or crowding out existing varieties of the same crop in the area. This can reduce genetic diversity of the species in the local area, as well as disrupting practices of other farmers and creating risks in the food system by encouraging reliance on a single variety. In addition, some GMOs require specific (usually synthetic) inputs such as fertilisers (some require a specific fertiliser from a specific company), which can also increase pollution impacts.

Indigenous Peoples’ food systems often involve collecting and growing many different seed varieties, which supports food resilience and strengthens biodiversity. When GMOs are released on or near Indigenous Peoples’ territories without adequate testing or protection, this can negatively affect traditional food systems. For example, cross-pollination from GMO seeds can affect traditional crops, causing reduced genetic diversity and the loss of specifically adapted local varieties. In turn this can lead to inadequate food, health impacts, impacts on traditional occupations, and a reduction in biological and genetic diversity within Indigenous territories.

By strengthening regulation and implementation of biosafety measures, this target can help safeguard Indigenous Peoples from negative impacts caused by biotechnology. Safeguards could include incorporating their full and effective participation in decision-making, ensuring the respect of free, prior and informed consent to the release of biotechnologies that may affect them, as well as by creating avenues for accountability where biotechnologies have caused or do cause harm.

This target also seeks to make sure that results of and benefits from biotechnology are fairly and equitably shared. For Indigenous Peoples, this could include for example helping them to access new varieties of crops that may be more resistant to climate change. Biotechnology may also sometimes be developed using Indigenous Peoples' traditional knowledge (such as knowledge of the characteristics of different local varieties) - in which case mechanisms to ensure access and benefit sharing should be in place.

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*Produce of Comunidad Campesina de Cayara, Ayacucho, Peru. Credit: Matias Perez Ojeda del Arco, FPP*



### OFFICIAL CBD TARGET TEXT

Establish, strengthen capacity for, and implement in all countries biosafety measures as set out in Article 8(g) of the Convention on Biological Diversity and measures for the handling of biotechnology and distribution of its benefits as set out in Article 19 of the Convention.