

# New 'fast track' Access and Benefit-Sharing Agreement for Costa Rican microbes

BRAUNSCHWEIG, LOWER SAXONY, GERMANY, January 19, 2022 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The Leibniz Institute DSMZ German Collection of Microorganisms and Cell Cultures GmbH and the Costa Rican National Commission for Biodiversity Management (CONAGEBIO) of the Ministry of Environment and Energy recently signed a new "fast track" framework for access and benefit sharing (ABS) of Costa Rican microbes deposited in the DSMZ ex situ collection. The agreement significantly simplifies the process of depositing and using microbial resources from Costa Rica obtained from the DSMZ bioresource catalogue.



Costa Rica is a megadiverse country home to a wealth of biological diversity including this strain of *Clostridoides difficile*; Source: Dörte Becher, Greifwald and DSMZ

ABS obligations of Costa Rican genetic resources stem from the 1992 UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) to which Costa Rica and Germany are a party. This treaty has three main objectives: the conservation of biological diversity, the sustainable use of its components and the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising from the utilization of genetic resources.

As a registered collection under the European Union's Regulation (511/2014), the DSMZ has a strong commitment to ensure ABS compliance. The DSMZ open collection offers not only a wide diversity of microbial resources, but also provides legal information and ABS documentation, which reduces the bureaucratic burden for compliance from the DSMZ customers.

Before the new agreement, the users of Costa Rican material from the DSMZ bioresource catalogue would have needed to contact and apply for permits in Costa Rica for each new microbial resource, in order to guarantee benefit-sharing with the providing country. This procedure, however, is incompatible with the International Code of Nomenclature of

Prokaryotes (ICNP) that requires new type strains to be available without restrictions. Before discussions began, the DSMZ feared it could not accept strains from Costa Rica for deposit. The Costa Rican authorities wanted to facilitate and ensure that scientists were able to deposit and publish new species of microbes.

The new agreement is a win-win for both sides. Costa Rican microbial strains can now be deposited to and distributed by the DSMZ for basic, non-commercial research and the fast-track mechanism is compatible with the ICNP and guarantees benefits will be shared according to the CBD. For commercial use of Costa Rican strains, researchers will have to contact Costa Rican authorities and obtain a commercial ABS permit.

Under the fast-track procedure, the customer provides information about their intended research with the Costa Rican strain in a standardized form and agrees to share non-monetary benefits, such as scientific publications resulting from the research, with Costa Rica. The Leibniz Institute DSMZ will regularly inform Costa Rican authorities on the distribution of Costa Rican microbial strains. This new process is currently applicable to over 50 microbial strains in the DSMZ bioresource catalogue (see [example](#)).

“The fast track agreement shows that when two partners come together in a trustful environment, it can improve processes and increase efficiency for all sides including the users of resources”, says M.Sc. Angela González Grau, Executive Director of CONAGEBIO. Prof. Dr. Jörg Overmann, microbiologist and Scientific Director of the Leibniz Institute DSMZ, is also optimistic: “We found a compromise with our Costa Rican colleagues and think this agreement can be a model for future discussions with other countries to establish science-friendly ABS processes”.

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About the Leibniz Institute DSMZ

The Leibniz Institute DSMZ-German Collection of Microorganisms and Cell Cultures is the world's most diverse collection of biological resources (bacteria, archaea, protists, yeasts, fungi, bacteriophages, plant viruses, genomic bacterial DNA as well as human and animal cell lines). Microorganisms and cell cultures are collected, investigated and archived at the DSMZ. As an institution of the Leibniz Association, the DSMZ with its extensive scientific services and biological resources has been a global partner for research, science and industry since 1969. The DSMZ is the first registered collection in Europe (Regulation (EU) No. 511/2014) and certified according to the quality standard ISO 9001:2015. As a patent depository, it offers the only possibility in Germany to deposit biological material in accordance with the requirements of the Budapest Treaty. In addition to scientific services, research is the second pillar of the DSMZ. The institute, located on the Science Campus Braunschweig-Süd, accommodates more than 79,000

cultures and biomaterials and has around 200 employees. [www.dsmz.de](http://www.dsmz.de)

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