



PROGRAM FOR BIOSAFETY SYSTEMS

A partnership program for biosafety capacity development

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GHANA

PBS Supports a Legal Framework for Biosafety

The Program for Biosafety Systems (PBS) has been building biosafety regulatory capacity in Ghana since 2004. A complementary effort, the Agricultural Biotechnology Support Project II, is facilitating the development of genetically modified (GM) crops. The PBS Sub-Regional Coordinator for West Africa, based in Accra, has ensured Ghana's active involvement in regional activities.



Members of Parliament on a field visit at the Biotechnology and Nuclear Agriculture Research Institute (BNARI), Kwabenya, Accra, Ghana. (© 2006 John Asiagodo).

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Strategic Objectives for PBS/ Ghana, 2004–2008

- Develop a biotechnology and biosafety policy for the country
- Facilitate implementation of the Ghana biosafety law
- Build capacity to conduct confined field trials (CFTs) for GM crops and for environmental and food safety assessments
- Raise awareness on biotechnology issues among a variety of stakeholders to enable informed decision making

Results

PBS Ghana has achieved most of its strategic objectives, significantly improving awareness of biotechnology issues and laying the groundwork for biosafety legislation and confined field trials.

Highlights

- Established a Country Advisory Group in 2005 that collaborates with the government on biotechnology and biosafety issues and is working to implement a national biosafety program.

- Helped draft a national biotechnology and biosafety policy, which is being considered by the Cabinet. Biosafety regulations have also been drafted to enable implementation of the biosafety law when passed.
- Laid the foundation for the conduct of CFTs by training scientists, trial managers, and regulatory officials. Two research institutions plan to apply for field trials for virus-resistant cassava and insect-resistant Bt maize.
- Strengthened the local knowledge base with socioeconomic studies on introducing GM vegetables and cassava into Ghana. Local universities plan to launch biosafety training courses in 2008.
- Increased understanding of biotechnology and biosafety issues among stakeholders, ranging from policymakers to farmer groups. As a result, media and civil society have been calling for the passage of the biosafety bill.
- Enhanced regional cooperation by helping to develop a biotechnology and biosafety plan for West and Central Africa, and by training policymakers, scientists, media,

and others in areas such as risk communications and processing CFT applications.

Next Steps

- Passage of the biosafety law is a top priority for Ghana in 2008. Continued collaboration between local partners and civil society, farmers' groups, and the media to apply pressure to the government will be essential.
- Upon passage of the biosafety law, the National Biosafety Authority will require ongoing capacity building, including updated training for regulators and assistance with technical reviews of field trial applications.
- Activities supporting the design and implementation of field trials, as well as facilitating the application process to introduce GM food and agricultural commodities, will be necessary for progress on CFTs.
- Risk assessment training linked to specific products, and assistance for regulatory officials in identifying GM products in foods and interpreting food safety data, will be required.

Local Partners

Biotechnology and Nuclear Agriculture Research Institute, Council for Scientific and Industrial Research's Crops Research Institute, Country Advisory Group, Ministry of Education, Science, and Sports, National Association of Farmers and Fisherman, and the National Biosafety Committee.

International Partners

The Donald Danforth Plant Science Center, Michigan State University, and the Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa.