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**PROGRAM FOR BIOSAFETY SYSTEMS**

A partnership program for biosafety capacity development

KENYA**PBS Helps Set the Stage for Biosafety Legislation**

The Program for Biosafety Systems' (PBS) three-year project for Kenya, approved in 2007, aims to implement a functional national biosafety system by building capacity and streamlining regulatory processes.

Initial PBS activities in Kenya focused on providing technical regulatory support to facilitate confined field trials of genetically modified (GM) cotton and corn. Kenya was also active in PBS regional activities, participating in policy roundtables and benefiting from legal reviews and a workshop for lawyers, regulatory officials, and policymakers.



Principal investigator for Bt cotton trials Dr. Charles Waturu (far left) listens to policymakers' contributions during a study visit to biotechnology research and development projects in Kenya. (© 2007 International Service for the Acquisition of Agri-Biotech Applications)

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Strategic Objectives for PBS/ Kenya

- Provide technical regulatory support to facilitate confined field trials (CFTs)
- Enhance the risk communication abilities of high-level policymakers and regulators
- Strengthen the National Biosafety Committee (NBC) Secretariat's coordination and information support functions
- Improve the efficiency of regulatory agencies in handling requests and managing GM crop releases

Results

PBS and its partners have laid the groundwork to enact the Kenya Biosafety Bill by establishing linkages among key national institutions and building support for the bill among biosafety regulatory agencies.

Highlights

- Helped prepare the Kenya Biosafety Bill for enactment (expected in

2008) by participating in consultations to revise the bill, educating members of Parliament on the bill and countering misleading information, and preparing briefing documents for policymakers and the media.

- Identified and prioritized the regulations necessary to implement the biosafety bill, and set up task forces to develop and review these regulations. So far, regulations on “contained use” and “deliberate release” have been drafted.
- Streamlined procedures for managing CFTs by adopting a more user-friendly application form, developing standard operating procedures, and building capacity for scientists, inspectors, trial managers, technicians, and decision makers.
- Produced informational and educational materials for high-level policymakers and other decision makers to justify the need for a biosafety law in Kenya, explaining biotechnology's role in poverty alleviation and addressing other biotechnology concerns. These

materials helped educate parliamentarians, allowing them to objectively debate the Biosafety Bill and move the bill through the legislature more efficiently.

Next Steps

- Continue providing guidance and information to policymakers to support Parliament's enactment of the Kenya Biosafety Bill.
- Upgrade Kenya's regulatory framework to accommodate commercial releases of GM products by supporting the NBC and regulatory agencies in the process of drafting and reviewing regulations.
- Provide further guidance to the NBC and regulatory agencies for the adoption of additional technical guidelines, and to improve coordination and decision making.
- Continue producing informative materials and coordinating activities to strengthen risk communication capacity.

Local Partners

The Department of Veterinary Services, Kenya Bureau of Standards, Kenya Plant Health Inspectorate Service, National Biosafety Committee, National Council for Science and Technology, National Environment Management Authority, and the Pest Control Products Board.

International Partners

African Centre for Technology Studies, Association for Strengthening Agricultural Research in Eastern and Central Africa, Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa, Donald Danforth Plant Science Center, East African Community, International Service for the Acquisition of Agri-biotech Applications (ISAAA) AfriCenter, and Michigan State University.