



PROGRAM FOR BIOSAFETY SYSTEMS

A partnership program for biosafety capacity development

Learn More

- Program for Biosafety Systems
www.ifpri.org/pbs/pbs.asp
- Institut d'Economie Rurale du Mali
www.ier.ml
- International Service for the Acquisition of Agri-Biotech Applications
www.isaaa.org
- AfricaBio
www.africabio.com/index.shtml

MALI

PBS Trains Officials to Implement Laws and Field Trials

The Program for Biosafety Systems (PBS) has worked closely with Mali's Institut d'Economie Rurale, focusing on paving the way for confined field trials for genetically modified (GM) crops. This partnership has helped train stakeholders in risk communication and other biosafety issues.



Farmers and scientists gather in a field of millet and Dolichos lablab (hyacinth bean). (© 2006 Dr. Samba Traoré)

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Strategic Objectives for PBS/ Mali, 2004–2007

- Create a favorable environment for biotechnology research and development
- Strengthen national capacities to implement a biosafety system for the safe handling, transfer, and use of biotechnology products developed locally and internationally
- Inform and educate policymakers and stakeholders about the role of biotechnology in meeting national goals for food security, economic development, and poverty reduction; and the importance of a biosafety system in guarding against unacceptable risks to environmental and food safety

Results

Mali progressed from being a country with limited experience in GM research applications and related biosafety considerations in 2004 to one with a heightened level of knowledge and understanding of biosafety issues and GM crops in 2007. As a result, the country is prepared to receive and review applications for confined field trials (CFTs).

Highlights

- Helped lay the foundation for a Presidential Decree on Biosafety through effective outreach activities and capacity building. The Decree has been signed and is with the National Assembly for ratification.
- Prepared and disseminated communications materials and organized outreach events in collaboration with the International Service for the Acquisition of Agri-Biotech Applications (ISAAA), AfricaBio, and the Agricultural Biotechnology Support Project II (ABSP-II). Journalists were trained to better understand and communicate biotechnology issues, and media representatives and scientists participated in a risk communication workshop.
- Helped CFTs move forward by developing guidelines and a streamlined application form and by training field trial inspectors, environmental law experts, scientists, government officials, and potential trial managers.
- Trained a Ministry of Health official in food safety at Michigan State

University, resulting in a draft national GM food safety policy.

- Formed the “Group Consultatif sur la Biotechnologie”—composed of a broad range of representatives from the private sector, government, farmer groups, research institutions, and civil society—to provide advisory services to the Ministry of Agriculture, lead outreach to stakeholders, and raise awareness of biotechnology issues.

Next Steps

- Following the approval of the Biosafety Decree, regulatory officials and scientists will require hands-on mentoring to put into practice their earlier training on reviewing applications and conducting field trials, respectively.
- Additional research on biosafety by the Institut d’Economie Rurale du Mali, including gene flow studies, will be necessary to

Local Partners

Group Consultatif sur la Biotechnologie, L’Institut d’Economie Rurale du Mali, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Health, National Health Department, and the Parliamentary Sub-Commission on Genetic Engineering.

International Partners

AfricaBio, Agricultural Biotechnology Support Project II, International Service for the Acquisition of Agri-Biotech Applications, and Michigan State University.

- bolster expertise within regulatory agencies.
- A national stakeholder debate on the draft GM food safety policy will refine and legitimize the document, at which point the National Health Department needs to develop an implementation strategy for the policy.