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**PROGRAM FOR BIOSAFETY SYSTEMS**

A partnership program for biosafety capacity development

**UGANDA****PBS Supports the Safe Conduct of Field Trials**

**S**ince 2004, the Program for Biosafety Systems (PBS) has partnered with local institutions and USAID-funded projects to develop biotechnology and biosafety capacity in Uganda. In recent years, Uganda has made significant progress toward passing biosafety legislation and establishing a system to review and conduct confined field trials of genetically modified (GM) plant genotypes.



Participants in a Biotechnology Awareness training for media in Mbarara, Uganda. (© 2007 Barbara Zawedde)

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## Strategic Objectives for PBS/ Uganda, 2004–2007

- Achieve passage of the Uganda Biotechnology and Biosafety Policy and related legislation
- Strengthen capacity for risk assessment and risk management
- Provide regulatory support for conducting confined field trials (CFTs) for GM banana and Bt cotton
- Strengthen regulatory capacity for review and approval of commodity imports
- Initiate regulatory capacity building for reviewing applications for commercial release

## Results

In collaboration with its partners, PBS Uganda has helped move biosafety legislation forward, build capacity, and implement a communications strategy.

## Highlights

- Collaborated with partners to support CFTs for black sigatoka-resistant banana, which in 2007 became the first GM crop planted in Uganda. PBS helped design the

- containment facility, develop guidelines for field trial management, and train scientists, regulators, trial managers, and crop inspectors.
- Supported the National Biosafety Committee (NBC) in building skills and confidence in evaluating applications for CFTs. Cotton with insect-resistant and herbicide-tolerant traits was approved for field testing in 2007.
- Helped review the Uganda Biotechnology and Biosafety Policy and drafted papers explaining the policy options to various audiences.
- Enhanced capacity for risk assessment and risk management through trainings, including for biosafety regulators at the NBC and the NARO Institutional Biosafety Committee.
- Strengthened the knowledge base for biotechnology and biosafety through university and non-academic programs and research grants, and by bolstering regional cooperation in East Africa.
- Developed a communications strategy, including outreach to media, a website and quarterly newsletter, and the development of a television documentary series, which first aired in 2007.

## Next Steps

- The government is reviewing the Biotechnology and Biosafety Policy and proposed Biosafety law. Once adopted, PBS will engage in consultations and provide policy research to support the decision-making process.
- National institutions such as the NBC Secretariat will require additional support, particularly in biosafety management for open releases. PBS will provide biosafety training programs to the relevant authorities.
- As a pipeline of GM crops becomes ready for field trials, PBS will continue to build expertise in risk assessment and risk management.
- Understanding the risks and benefits associated with GM crops will become increasingly necessary as GM plant varieties become more common in Uganda. PBS will expand its communications activities to promote awareness and understanding of biotechnology and biosafety to a wide variety of audiences.

## Local Partners

Makerere University, National Agricultural Research Organization, National Biosafety Committee, Uganda Bureau of Standards, and the Uganda National Council of Science and Technology.

## International Partners

The Agricultural Biotechnology Support Project II, African Centre for Technology Studies, Association for Strengthening Agricultural Research in Eastern and Central Africa, Calvin College, Donald Danforth Plant Science Center, East African Science and Technology Commission, Michigan State University, and USAID's Agricultural Productivity Enhancement Program.