



Africa Biosafety Watch ABNE NEWSLETTER (April - June, 2017)

Regional Approach to Control Mosquitoes that transmit Diseases in Africa



Group photo of NEPAD experts with biosafety regulation experts from Burkina Faso, Ghana, Mali and Senegal

In Accra from the 5th to the 8th of June 2017, a team from the NEPAD Agency led by Professor Aggrey Ambali, Head of Industrialization, Science, Technology and Innovation (ISTI) is meeting with these regulators from four West Africa countries (Burkina Faso, Ghana, Senegal, Mali) and Uganda to discuss and formulate a preliminary regional approach to the control of disease transmitting mosquitoes in the region, building on their experiences during a study tour to South America. Mosquitoes of the genus *Aedes aegypti* and *Aedes albopictus* are responsible for the transmission of arboviruses responsible for Yellow fever, Chikungunya, Zika virus, Dengue, Malaria and Rift Valley Fever. These diseases are increasingly becoming a global public health concern due to their rapid spread.

In this Issue

- ❖ Regional Approach to Control Mosquitoes that transmit Diseases in Africa
- ❖ Training workshop on GMO Dossier Review for African Regulators, and Launch of ABNE Biosafety Socioeconomic
- ❖ Biosafety High level consultative meeting in Nairobi
- ❖ Deliberations on Biosafety Capacity Development in Africa

In April 2017, regulators and other senior government officials from five countries (Burkina Faso, Ghana, Mali, Nigeria and Senegal) in the ECOWAS region with Tanzania and Uganda were on a study tour, organised by the NEPAD Agency and Danforth Centre, to Brazil and Colombia, to gain practical exposures to integrated disease transmitting mosquito control programs in those countries and understand their regulatory requirements and processes, as well as assess their effectiveness.

The regulators and NEPAD Agency staff are discussing experiences from the study tour and identification of approaches that can be adopted for a regional programme on regulatory strengthening. The topics covered include technology development and transfer, regulatory capacity strengthening, inter-sectoral collaboration, south-south collaboration, advocacy and policy articulation, community engagement, and leveraging political will and commitment. The essence of regional harmonisation in disease control activities cannot be overlooked, as the mobile nature of mosquitoes makes it more practical for control efforts to be at regional levels.

The CEO of the National Biosafety Authority of Ghana, Mr Eric Okoree, in his opening remarks, lauded the efforts of the NEPAD Agency and its partners in spearheading such discussions at regional

level and reiterated the commitment of his authority in ensuring that disease vectors are effectively controlled in the ECOWAS region and on the continent as a whole.

Professor Ambali welcomed all present and expressed the hope that this effort would be accepted not as a foreign intervention but one initiated and implemented by the continent in response to addressing its health issues and ensuring Africa achieves its aspiration of eliminating malaria in Africa by 2030.

In 2015, WHO reports that there were 212 million new cases of malaria worldwide with 90 % occurring in Africa. A study published in 2013 estimated that 390 million dengue virus infections occurred throughout the tropics in 2010 and 16% of those infections were from Africa - even though the disease is not often recognized as a risk. The Zika virus has also been isolated in Africa in mosquitoes and humans and it has been estimated that over 16 African countries are at high risk of the disease. Forty-seven countries in Africa are reportedly either endemic for or have regions that are endemic for, yellow fever. These disease burdens call for an integrated disease transmitters control approach that can be effective at regional levels.

Training workshop on Biotech Dossier Review for African Regulators, and Launch of ABNE Biosafety Socioeconomic

NEPAD Agency African Biosafety Network of Expertise (ABNE), in partnership with the Michigan State University (MSU), organized a 5-day workshop on GMO dossier review for African regulators from June 26 – 30, 2017 in Accra, Ghana. The workshop sought to technically capacitate participants in the evaluation of biosafety application dossiers to enable them make science-based recommendations for consideration by competent national authorities during decision-making. It was attended by biosafety regulators from eight African countries: Cameroon, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Nigeria, Swaziland, and Uganda.

During a brief opening ceremony, Dr. Jeremy Ouedraogo, Head of NEPAD Agency ABNE stressed

the importance of having functional biosafety systems noting that they would provide an adequate level of safety in accessing new beneficial products. He also noted that the meeting was a key step in creating a platform that will foster cooperation towards attaining future joint reviews and mutual recognition of environmental and food safety assessment reports within biosafety systems in regional economic communities. Michigan State University's WorldTap Programme Director, Dr. Karim Maredia, in mentioning their long standing tradition of working with countries in Africa, pledged MSUs continued support in availing global resources to ensure a critical mass of assessors with the necessary skills and tools to be able to conduct



Dr Woldeysus Sinebo, ABNE Senior Programme Officer, making a presentation

science-based risk assessment on applications. At the end of the training participants indicated strengthened competencies in discharging their mandate.

Beyond the training, the resource networks from which participants were drawn – environmental biosafety and food safety resource networks – are expected to serve as support mechanisms for competent national authorities for biosafety and to foster linkages between

African experts and other experts from around the world for resources, knowledge and experience sharing.

On the margins of the GMO dossier review workshop, NEPAD Agency ABNE also launched its fourth Experts' Network, the Socioeconomic Resource Network. The launch was the outcome of a 2-day inception and planning meeting from June 28 – 29, 2017 that involved participants from Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Ghana, and Nigeria.



Group photo of the Network on Biosafety Socioeconomic Aspects

In an opening speech, Dr. Jeremy Ouedraogo, Head of NEPAD Agency ABNE observed that networks had earlier been established for environmental safety, food safety, the legal aspects of biosafety and for Competent National Authorities for Biosafety. These networks have thus far served as platforms for sharing knowledge and best practices and also for providing support to competent national biosafety authorities. In addition, a steady pool of experts with requisite technical competencies is being developed in these specialized fields. Dr. Karim Maredia of Michigan State University reiterated the importance of harnessing expertise and resources both on the African continent and globally but in a manner that serves the continent's best interests.

The NEPAD Agency ABNE Senior Programme Officer,

Samuel Timpo, who is the Coordinator for this network, enumerated the objectives of the network including to advise African parties on critical considerations in implementing Article 26 of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety; assist AU member states, upon request, in developing guidelines for the inclusion of SECs in biosafety decision-making; serve as a platform for multi-stakeholder engagement and interaction on managing biotechnology and stimulate a policy debate for increased awareness among key actors on their roles and responsibilities; and identify and raise awareness on critical biosafety issues in member states and regional economic blocs and also provide opportunity and context for expert-dialogue on policy options and to develop consensus action steps for policy development and implementation.

Biosafety High level consultative meeting in Nairobi

The NEPAD Agency African Biosafety Network of Expertise (ABNE) in conjunction with the Program for Biosafety Systems and The National Biosafety Authority held a high policy Consultation in Nairobi, on 12th May, 2017 to discuss the process regarding the handling of biosafety dossiers in Kenya. This meeting brought together stakeholders including Kenya National Biosafety Authority (NBA), the National Environmental Management Authority (NEMA), Kenya Agricultural and Livestock Organization (KALRO), the International Service for the Acquisition of



Group picture of the participants

Agri-biotech Applications (ISAAA), African Agricultural Technology Foundation (AATF), Ministry of Agriculture, and Kenya Plant health inspectorate Service (KEPHIS).

The Principal Secretary from the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources, and representatives from the office of the Deputy President

was also in attendance. In 2016, the NBA gave a conditional approval for Bt maize and Bt cotton

applications for general release and recommended that they commence the National Performance Trials (NPT) under auspices of KEPHIS. One of the key conditions was that the applicant should conduct an

Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) of experimental sites and submits report to NEMA for approval before conducting the NPT.

The applicant submitted the EIA report as required but to date no decision has been made on the NPT.

The representative of the NEMA emphasized that the EIA report should be site specific not combined report as it was submitted by the applicant. Delegates from South Africa response gave a different view on the issue of EIA as requested by NBA through NEMA that

in South Africa EIA is only required for the crops that are indigenous and that thus far all the approval already given in South Africa, no EIA has been required.

NEPAD Agency ABNE presented case studies of similar multi-location trials and general release experiments currently being conducted in Ethiopia, Swaziland and Nigeria. It is a hope that this high level consultative meeting will facilitate a coordinated working approach and strengthen the biosafety regulatory framework in Kenya.

Deliberations on Biosafety Capacity Development in Africa

NEPAD Agency's African Biosafety Network of Expertise (ABNE), in partnership with Croplife, the International Food Policy Research Institute's (IFPRI) programme for Biosafety Systems, together with other partners, organized a Stakeholders' Coordination Meeting on Biosafety Capacity Development in Africa from May 3-4, 2017, in Yaoundé, Cameroon.



L to R: Dr Jeremy Ouédraogo, NEPAD Agency's Head of ABNE; Mr Akwa Patrick Kum Bong, Secretary General in the Ministry of Environment in Cameroon; Ms Judy Chambers from IFPRI and John McMurdy from Croplife

Attended by about 50 participants, the meeting was officially opened by Mr Akwa Patrick Kum Bong, Secretary General of the Ministry of Environment and the Protection of Nature in Cameroon. "The current trend is to use modern technologies in agriculture, pharmaceuticals and related sectors. That is why we think this meeting is very useful for Cameroon.

We currently have a biosafety project that builds the capacity of Cameroonians in the handling of biosafety in the country.

This project will build both human and infrastructure capacity in the country with the support of partners," the Secretary General said.

The objective of the meeting was to bring together leading biotechnology and biosafety stakeholders, as well as providers of technical assistance to share experiences and analyse the key capacity building needs and emerging challenges regarding the development and implementation of workable regulatory frameworks, both at national and

Sub-regional levels across the continent.

The meeting also aimed to strengthen alignment among biosafety service providers and stakeholders to build future collaborative efforts in biosafety capacity development, in addition to identifying actions and responsibilities among partners to implement functional biosafety regulations in Africa.

Upcoming events

- **17-20 July, 2017:** Biotechnology/Biosafety Communication Symposium and ANBAA meeting, Entebbe, Uganda
- **21-22 July, 2017:** Dialogue with MSU team, regulators & other stakeholders on the relevance, content and arrangements for a training on product stewardship, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
- **23-26 July, 2017:** Sensitization workshop for the parliamentary select committee on subsidiary legislation, Accra, Ghana
- **30 July – 2 August, 2017:** Consultation meeting with Stakeholders on the law revision process and implementation strategy of the recommendations from the National Academy of Sciences, Dakar, Senegal
- **5-7 August, 2017:** Capacity enhancement training for Mozambique GIIBs in collaboration with AATF for the four WEMA maize project countries, Maputo, Mozambique
- **9-11 August, 2017:** Training on CFT management; Environmental Safety, Food Safety and Communication”, Dodoma, Tanzania
- **16-18 August, 2017:** Organize a policy roundtable for stakeholder engagement and for fostering inter-agency collaborations, Lomé, Togo
- **20-22 August, 2017:** Biosafety sensitization and awareness creation for key stakeholders in regional states (Amhara, Afar & Tigray), Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
- **24 -26 August, 2017:** Consultation with and technical assistance to Cameroun NBC on the development of biosafety communication strategy and follow up on the development of a new biosafety and biosecurity law, Yaoundé, Cameroon
- **3-5 September, 2017:** Organize a workshop for stakeholder to own the process of the regulation developed - Ministry of justice, Ezulwini, Swaziland
- **10-14 September:** Stakeholders consultation on malaria mosquito vector control applications in Mali, Bamako, Mali
- **18-21 September, 2017:** Joint meeting on the socioeconomic guidance for biosafety decision making for Ghana and Nigeria, Accra Ghana
- **11-13 October, 2017:** Organize training workshop on biosafety inspection, monitoring and compliance for CFT inspections, Maputo, Mozambique
- **17-19 October, 2017:** Sensitization and awareness creation training workshop on biosafety /agricultural biotechnology for stakeholders including farmer groups, Lilongwe, Malawi
- **7-10 October, 2017:** Biosafety sensitization and awareness creation for key stakeholders in regional states (Oromiya, SNNP & Gambella & Bene Shangul), Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
- **22-28 October, 2017:** Study tour to Colombia and Brazil involving Ministers from Burkina Faso and Mali



NEPAD Agency – African Biosafety Network of Expertise

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