



Africa Biosafety Watch

ABNE NEWSLETTER (July - September, 2017)

Training Workshop on Biotechnology Products Application Evaluation in Namibia

NEPAD Agency ABNE in partnership with the National Commission on Research, Science and Technology (NCRST) organized a training workshop on mock application evaluation of biotechnology products from 17 – 22 September, 2017 for Namibian regulators and stakeholders.

The main objective of the workshop was to build the capacity of Namibian regulators on the basic concepts of assessing genetically modified organisms (GMO) applications and to equip Namibian regulators with the necessary tools for the handling of GMO applications. Twenty participants took part in this training, including regulators from the Biosafety secretariat and legal secretariat, the Biosafety council members, technical



Group picture of NEPAD Agency experts with participants

In this Issue

- ❖ Training Workshop on Biotechnology Products Application Evaluation in Namibia
- ❖ Stakeholder consultative meeting on biotech and biosafety policy in Zambia
- ❖ A new African Biosafety Communication Network Launched
- ❖ NEPAD Agency CEO, Dr. Ibrahim Assane Mayaki, Wins the African Agriculture Leadership Award 2017
- ❖ Training workshop on confined field trial management in Tanzania
- ❖ High Level Conference on Agricultural Transformation in Africa
- ❖ Technical Backstopping for the Development of Organogram and National Biosafety Clearing House in Ethiopia
- ❖ Capacity building for members of the National Biosafety Management Agency in Nigeria

experts from in line ministries and from Agro-Marketing and Trade Agency.

Through this workshop, the participants were successfully introduced to science background of the GMOs technologies, basic concepts of administrative handling of biosafety applications and they were able to understand the concept of risk analysis in the decision making pathways. The training also enhanced their capacity with regard to conducting risk assessment of GMOs and to review applications based on scientific evidence and socioeconomic considerations.

As per its mandate to provide technical support for the implementation of functional regulatory systems in African countries, ABNE is committed to continuing building the capacity of Namibian

regulators in the biosafety area. Future interventions will include giving in-depth understanding of food/feed safety assessment, environmental risk assessment and training media practitioners in biosafety reporting.

Stakeholder consultative meeting on biotech and biosafety policy in Zambia



Group picture of participants

NEPAD Agency ABNE, in partnership with COMESA ACTESA and the Zambian National Biosafety Authority organised a Stakeholder consultative workshop on the Review of the 'Revised Biotechnology and Biosafety Policy, from 25-26 September, 2017, in Livingstone.

The workshop was opened by the Hon Nkandu Luo, Member of Parliament and Minister for Higher Education. 40 Biotechnology and Biosafety Stakeholders attended the Workshop. They were from several institutions including the National Biosafety Authority, the University of Zambia, Zambia National Agricultural and Livestock Research Institute, the Ministry of Higher Education, the media, Zambia Land for Agro-ecology and Biodiversity, smallholder farmer

groups, Cotton Sector of Zambia, the Ministry of Health, and Organic farmer organisations among others.

The Government of Zambia has embarked on revising the Biotechnology and Biosafety Policy, which will pave the way for the revision of the Biosafety Act 2007 and other legal instruments.

NEPAD Agency ABNE will continue to provide technical support to the country for the implementation of functional biosafety regulatory systems that will help Zambia safely harness Science, technology and innovation opportunities for an effective and sustainable development.

A new African Biosafety Communication Network Launched

Under the auspices of NEPAD Agency ABNE, an African Biosafety Communication Network was launched on 18 July, 2017 in Entebbe during the Africa Ag-biotech and Biosafety Communication (ABBC) symposium.

The launching ceremony was chaired by Dr Jeremy Ouedraogo, Director of NEPAD Agency's West Africa Regional Office in Dakar.

It was co-chaired by Dr. Charles Mugoya, Chair of the Uganda National Biosafety Committee, Dr Theresa Ssengoba from the Uganda National Council for Science and Technology, Dr Douglas Buhler, Director/Assistant Vice-president and Administrative leader of Michigan State University AgBioResearch, and Margaret Karembu, Director of ISAAA Africenter. Around 60 people, including government officials, communications specialists, NBC representatives and staff from various biosafety service providers in Africa took part in this event.

“After almost a decade of biosafety capacity enhancing to help build functional biosafety regulatory systems across the continent, NEPAD Agency ABNE is now strategically focusing on fostering proactive initiatives through specific experts networks to help African countries safely harness science technology and innovation opportunities. The communication network we are establishing today come after a successful implementation of other networks, namely the lawyers network, the food and feed safety network, the environmental network and the

socioeconomic network recently established in Accra”, said Dr Jeremy Ouedraogo in his opening remarks. This network is very timely, as Uganda’s parliament is preparing to pass the biosafety bill and we look forward to working with the members of this network to improve public understanding of biosafety in the country”, affirmed Dr. Charles Mugoya.

The key objectives of the African biosafety communication network are: to identify and support key biosafety media specialists in African countries and help them develop/update/implement country communication strategy; to help harmonize and optimize partners and service providers’ initiatives to build a strong and effective biosafety communication network in Africa; to effectively monitor outputs and outcomes of the support provided to the network and identify gaps and needs; to implement functional information sharing platforms for network members (Web pages, mailing list, social media and online resources etc.); and to provide timely communication assistance to countries especially in coordination with the Association of National Biosafety Agencies in Africa (ANBAA) for issue management, dissemination of sound research findings and benefits etc.



Photo of participants during the launch of the African Biosafety Communication Network

Partners of the network include ANBAA, ISAAA, Michigan State University, Network of biotechnology and biosafety journalists in West Africa (RECOAB), African Journalists Network for Africa (based in Nigeria), Network of science communication journalists in Togo, Uganda and in other countries, other networks and service providers operating in the biosafety sector in Africa. Members and potential members of the network will include Communication Specialists of biosafety service

providers in Africa, communication persons from the National Biosafety Authorities, members of national/regional science/biosafety communication networks and any other relevant candidate.

In the upcoming months, the network plans to implement a mailing group by August, 2017 and to organize a workshop to agree on draft network statutes and memoranda, and the annual work plan for the next year.

NEPAD Agency CEO Wins the African Agriculture Leadership Award 2017



NEPAD Agency CEO, Dr. Ibrahim Assane Mayaki was recently declared winner of the 2017 African Agriculture Leadership Award, awarded

By the Indian Council of Food and Agriculture (ICFA) in New Delhi, India.

“I am pleased to convey the decision of the National Organising Committee of 10th Global Agriculture Leadership Awards 2017, which met in New Delhi on Aug 1, 2017, under the Chairmanship of Prof. MS Swaminathan, Father of India’s Green Revolution, to confer upon you the African Agriculture Leadership Award 2017 for your pioneering work spanned over three decades towards empowering African farm and farmers through innovative policies, promoting agriculture research, investments, technology development, partnerships and international cooperation, which have positively impacted the lives of large number of farmers in African continent”, said Dr. MJ Khan, Chairman of ICFA.

Agriculture Leadership Awards were launched in 2008 to recognize the leadership roles played by individuals and institutions, which are positively impacting the lives of farmers and rural masses. The Awards are presented in different areas including Policy, Research, Extension, Farming, Industry, Environment, Innovations, Entrepreneurship, CSR, Development, Life Time Achievements, International Policies and State Leaderships.

Congratulations to NEPAD CEO for this recognition and for his effective leadership in spurring development initiatives across the African continent.

Training workshop on confined field trial management in Tanzania



Group picture of part of participants

NEPAD Agency ABNE in partnership with the Tanzanian Ministry of Environment carried out a training workshop on confined field trial (CFT) management from 19 to 20 September 2017, in Dar es Salam.

The workshop was officially opened by the Acting Permanent Secretary to the Vice President's office and the Director to the Environment Department. The meeting was attended by 34 people from both mainland Tanganyika and Zanzibar Island.

The content of the training on Confine Field Trial Management and Stewardship was very much appreciated and well received by the participants. The support of NEPAD/ABNE was sought at an appropriate time after the country planted its second WEMA maize at the CFT site in Dodoma. The next phase of ABNE technical support to Tanzanian will be on the development and implementation of a national biosafety communication strategy.

High Level Conference on Agricultural Transformation in Africa

NEPAD Agency ABNE in partnership with The Ugandan Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation, African Agricultural Technology Foundation (AATF), and the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) organized a High-Level Conference on Application on Science, Technology and Innovation in Harnessing Opportunities for Africa's Agricultural Transformation from 26 to 29 September 2017, in Kampala.

Close to 600 Participants took part in this conference, including Ministers from the Government of Uganda, Members of Parliament from the country and other African countries.

During the conference, Akile Sunday, ABNE Senior Programme Officer delivered a presentation on "Evidence-Based Biosafety Policies and Regulations for the Transformation of Africa's Agriculture". The message to the meeting resonated with the interest of many African countries.

Thanks to the support provided by NEPAD Agency and other international service providers to the Ugandan regulators and stakeholders, the country has finally passed her Biosafety bill into law. This will certainly allow Uganda to safely continue the use of science, technology and innovation opportunities for a sustainable development of the country.



Mr Sunday Akile, ABNE Senior Programme Officer represented ABNE Director at this conference

Technical Backstopping for the Development of Organogram and National BCH for biosafety administration in Ethiopia

NEPAD Agency ABNE in partnership with The Biosafety Directorate of Ethiopia organized a technical backstopping meeting for the development of organogram and national BCH for the Biosafety Directorate of Ethiopia to enhance the functionality of the biosafety regulatory system. The meeting took place from 29 – 30 September 2017 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

On the back of the progress that Ethiopia has made in revising its regulatory instruments and conducting field trials of Bt cotton, it became apparent that the Biosafety Directorate under the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change work out its organizational structure and also develop a national Biosafety Clearing House (BCH) Mechanism to facilitate exchange of



A view of part of participants

information on GMOs in the country.

During the meeting, ABNE experts provided technical support to develop an organogram and a national BCH for the Directorate. Seven experts from the biosafety regulatory and other Directorates including the Laws and Standards and the Information and Communication General Directorates of the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change participated in the meeting. The meeting produced a draft organogram consisting of 2 units under the Biosafety Directorate: a unit for Biosafety Evaluation and Administration and another unit

for Biosafety Inspection and Compliance Monitoring.

The meeting also sensitized personnel on the importance of BCH and shared experiences from other countries on the development and handling of national BCH. Further engagement and capacity building are needed to put all the instruments required for the full functionality of the biosafety system in the country. NEPAD Agency ABNE will continue catalyzing the regulatory process as the country looks forward to approving the general release of Bt cotton for commercial cultivation.

Capacity building for members of the National Biosafety Management Agency in Nigeria

NEPAD Agency ABNE in partnership with the National Biosafety Management Agency (NBMA) of Nigeria organized a series of training for members of the National Biosafety Management Agency in Nigeria, from 10 -14 September, 2017 in Abuja.

The NBMA recently recruited 172 new staff members and requested assistance from ABNE in training them. The training was mainly to expound on the roles and responsibilities of regulators in ensuring compliance under domestic and international laws and regulations. Upon request from the NBMA, NEPAD Agency ABNE also provided technical support for the review of an application for a permit for field trials for GM Cassava that has been modified for post-harvest starch reduction. As a partner, ABNE was also to present 3 papers at the 3rd Annual Biosafety Conference of the NBMA.

Newly recruited NBMA staff members obtained an overview of the application of biotechnology in Agriculture and how safety and non-safety concerns are addressed. They also gained in-depth knowledge on their roles and responsibilities as regulators, how the biosafety process works, and how decisions are reached.

This activity in Nigeria was also an opportunity to help identify outstanding guideline documents and standard operating procedures to be developed for inclusion in the 2018 annual work plan. Additional work to strengthen the quality management systems of the NBMA will be undertaken. There was an observed increased public interest in biotech/biosafety and increased activism which was evident during the 3rd Annual Biosafety Conference of the NBMA and this would require follow-up outreach programmes and the development of key messages.

Upcoming events

- **30-31 October, 2017:** Biosafety training workshop for regulators and other stakeholders, Yaoundé, Cameroon
- **15-16 November, 2017:** Annual meeting of ABNE Technical Advisory Committee, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia



NEPAD Agency – African Biosafety Network of Expertise

Managing Editor: Dr Jeremy T. Ouedraogo

Editorial Team: Mr. Samuel Timpo, Dr Moussa Savadogo, Mr. Jean W. Kebere

Contact: Email: info@nepadbiosafety.net; Tel: (221) 33 859 18 79; nepad-abne.net/

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