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ABNE

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Managing Editor:

Mr Samuel Timpo



Editorial Team:

Dr Woldeyesus Sinebo

Dr Jean W. Keberé

Mrs Mariam Ouedraogo/Seynou



abne@nepad.org



+221 (0) 33 859 18 79



<https://www.nepad.org/programme/african-biosafety-network-of-expertise-abne>

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What does the Rwandan New National Biosafety Law Entail?

Rwanda recently scored a landmark achievement by officially adopting a new national law that now governs biotechnology activities in the country. Until now only a dozen African countries have functional biosafety laws, namely South Africa, Egypt, Zimbabwe, Sudan, Malawi, Mozambique, Eswatini, Niger, Nigeria, Ghana, Burkina Faso, Kenya, Ethiopia, Senegal, and Rwanda.

The new biosafety law was gazetted in February 2024, which was the final step of its adoption after Parliament's approval in 2023. The law aligns with and builds on international biosafety measures as stipulated in the Cartagena Protocol to which the country is a party since 2004.

The Scope of the new law encompasses in particular import and export of GM products for food, feed, and/or processing, as well as research and planting aspects. The law also governs the use of the use of genetically modified animals and microorganisms

except those used for pharmaceutical purposes.

According to the law, no person is allowed to import, export, and research into, develop, or apply biotechnology techniques without a permit from the competent national authority, REMA. And for all types of use, labeling GM products is mandatory.

Before the new law, biotechnology activities in Rwanda were regulated through a national legal framework including an institutional setup and standard operating procedures or guidelines for different cases regarding the use of LMOs, including R&D, confined field trials, and commercial release.

Rwanda is currently carrying out field trials of GM cassava and GM maize. The adoption the new law and expected complementary guidelines will certainly help the country safely reap biotechnology benefits for its development.



14 New Genetically Modified Products Approved for Commercialization Ghana



Ghana's National Biosafety Authority (NBA) recently approved the commercialization of 14 new genetically modified products comprising eight maize events and 6 soybean events. This authorization covers the use of approved GM products as food, feed, and/or industrial products.

This decision is a significant step in the country's effort to safely harness biotechnology opportunities to develop its agricultural sector for

local food and nutrition needs and exports. This new milestone in the NBA's decisions comes after the approval in 2022 of the environmental release of GM cowpea resistant to the Maruca pod borer that destroys more than %50 of the cowpea pods when no control measure is applied. The GM cowpea needs almost no chemical treatment while its conventional counterpart requires at least eight prays in its three-month life cycle.

If safely harnessed, new technologies such as modern biotechnologies may bring a significant change in the development of the African continent in particular in the agricultural and the health sector. AUDA-NEPAD has been closely working with countries in the past decade, through the African Biosafety Network of Expertise (ABNE) programme, to implement

functional biosafety regulatory systems that may help safely reap the benefits of agricultural biotechnologies. This effort aligns with the African Union's Agenda 2063 Aspiration 1, aiming for «a prosperous Africa based on inclusive growth and sustainable development,» and Goal Number 5, targeting «Modern agriculture for increased productivity and production.» Dr.

Dr Koussao Some - New Director General of the National Biosafety Agency in Burkina Faso

Koussao Somé recently took office as the newly appointed Director General of the Agence Nationale de Biosécurité (ANB) in Burkina Faso, succeeding Dr. Oumar Traoré, who had held the position since 2021.

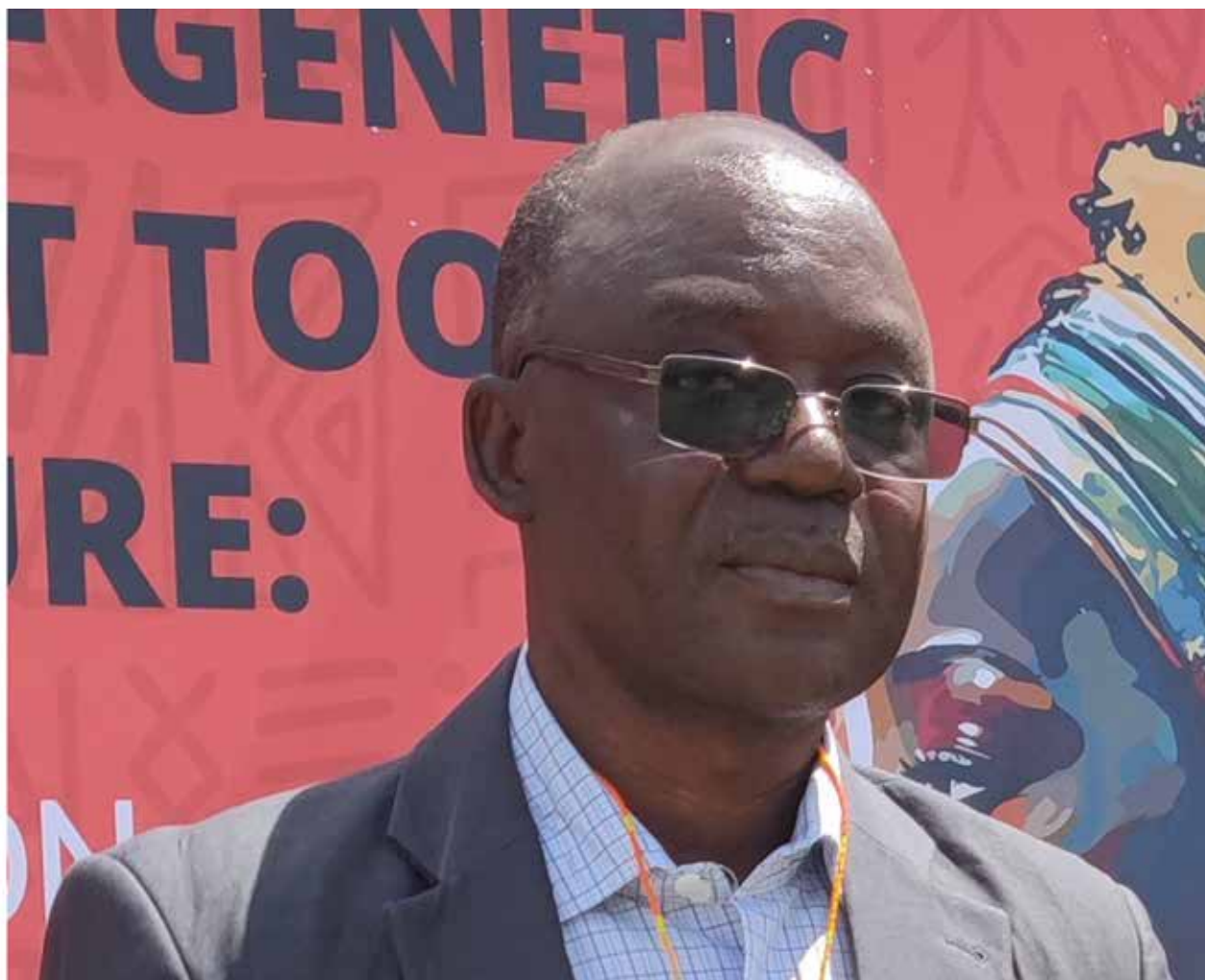
On February 2024 ,9, Dr. Somé was sworn in by Prof. Samuel Pare, the Secretary General of the Ministry of Higher Education, Research, and Innovation, during a handover ceremony in Ouagadougou.

Dr. Oumar Traoré served nearly two years as the Director General of the agency. During his tenure, he successfully facilitated the contribution of Burkinabè expertise to the development of standards and the establishment of regional and community regulatory systems for modern biotechnologies. He also played a pivotal role in expediting the accreditation process of the National Biosafety Laboratory. Dr. Traoré

expressed his willingness to continue supporting the incoming Director General for the success of his mission.

In his congratulatory message to Dr. Traoré, Dr. Somé commended his predecessor for the significant accomplishments. He expressed his dedication to addressing the current challenges with the support of the agency's staff.

Dr Somé is a seasoned scientist and plant breeder specializing in sweet potato and root crop breeding. He held several research and managerial positions at the National Environment and Agricultural Research Institute, INERA. Before joining ANB, he was appointed Technical Advisor to the Minister of Higher Education, Research and Innovation, cumulatively with his position as Vice-Chair of the National Variety Registration Committee.



AUDA-NEPAD collaborates closely with National Biosafety Authorities across Africa to bolster their efforts on the ground. These government regulatory bodies are responsible for ensuring that the use of modern biotechnologies aligns with national regulations and international standards, particularly concerning products derived from genetic engineering and new gene technologies. Through its flagship biosafety program, the African Biosafety Network of

Expertise, AUDA-NEPAD offers technical support to African countries to establish functional biosafety regulatory frameworks and effectively leverage biotechnology opportunities. Such assistance aligns with the African Union's Agenda 2063 Aspiration 1, aiming for «a prosperous Africa based on inclusive growth and sustainable development,» and Goal Number 5, targeting «Modern agriculture for increased productivity and production.»

African Biosafety Network of Expertise (ABNE)

**Africa-based, Africa-led and Africa-owned
biosafety service provider**

Building functional biosafety regulatory systems in Africa