

Program for Biosafety Systems

What is the Program for Biosafety Systems?

The Program for Biosafety Systems is a partnership between USAID and the Government of Kenya, managed by the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), to support the development and use of biosafety systems to enhance agricultural innovation in Kenya. The program addresses biosafety through research, capacity development, and outreach and works with stakeholders to develop and implement biosafety systems that ultimately expand producer choice, inspire consumer confidence, facilitate trade, and promote agricultural research and development.

Project Duration and Budget

October 2010 - September 2013
\$ 600,000

Who implements the Program for Biosafety Systems?

The Kenya program is implemented by the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), through a local team, in collaboration with Kenya's National Biosafety Authority and the International Service for the Acquisition of Agri-biotech Applications. Key partners in program implementation include the regulatory agencies and Ministries represented in the NBA Board.

International Food Policy Research Institute
www.ifpri.org

National Biosafety Authority Kenya
www.biosafetykenya.go.ke

International Service for the Acquisition of Agri-biotech Applications
www.isaaa.org

Where does the Program for Biosafety Systems work?

The program's coverage is nationwide. Its outreach and training activities have included, for example, agricultural extension officers stationed in Rift Valley and Coast provinces. Provincial and District officers are located in the Ministry of Public Health, Kenya Bureau of Standards, and the National Environmental Management Authority.

What does the Program for Biosafety Systems do?

The Program for Biosafety Systems supports the development and implementation of national biosafety systems in Kenya through partner-driven activities and initiatives. The program provided leadership in development and adoption of a coordination framework that delineates the regulatory mandates of various agencies.

The program supports the Kenya National Biosafety Authority including training staff, Board members and biosafety regulatory agencies.

The program helped develop a comprehensive manual and standard operating procedures for the sound conduct of confined field trials for biotech crop plants and spearheaded development and adoption of crop-specific confined field trial guidelines and crop biology documents to inform regulatory decision-making. The program provides regulatory support to a coalition of governmental, non-governmental and business organizations working toward the general release of insect-resistant biotech cotton.

The program enhances the communication capacity of senior policymakers and regulators through training courses on communicating the potential risks and benefits of biotechnology. In partnership with national and international organizations, the program provided support for stakeholder forums such as BioAWARE and the Open Forum on Agricultural Biotechnology. The Program for Biosafety Systems also supported the National Biosafety Authority to organize a preparatory workshop for delegates who represented Kenya at the sixth meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety (COP-MOP6) in India.

How is the Program for Biosafety Systems making a difference?

Under the Program for Biosafety Systems, a number of policies, regulations, and administrative procedures were supported, including commercialization guidelines for genetically modified crops and Standard Operating Procedures that were developed by the National Biosafety Authority with technical support from the program.

A total of 21 participants (14 male and 7 female) were trained on Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety. This enhanced the delegates level of preparedness and understanding of COP-MOP6 key issues for productive and informed participation. The capacity of National Biosafety Authority to implement the Biosafety Act has been enhanced. Also, 42 people participated in workshops on the development of commercialization guidelines for genetically modified crops. A training course on biosafety communication and regulation of genetically modified organisms was undertaken for Public Health Department officials and a similar one held for Public Communication Officers drawn from government institutions. Altogether, 230 people were trained in various aspects of biosafety systems.

What key challenges does the Program for Biosafety Systems face?

Negative publicity and public debate and media controversy follow biotechnology and biosafety decision-making. Strong opposition and heightened negative reporting from anti-biotechnology lobby groups preceding enactment of the Biosafety Act in 2009 aimed to obstruct the legislative process. The program's coalition building and joint message development based on scientific information was essential in providing timely responses. An ongoing and concerted communications strategy is essential to respond to emerging needs and challenges presented by enactment of the National Biosafety Authority.

For more information

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The Program for Biosafety Systems in Action

In response to public demands and expectations, the National Biosafety Authority Management has declared that the Year 2013 will be the “**Year of National Biosafety Advocacy**” in Kenya and the driving theme will be: “**Raising public Awareness and participation in Biosafety for National Development and implementation of vision 2030**”. This will also be our theme for the Second Annual Biosafety conference in August, 2013.

The 2013 Year of Biosafety Advocacy supports the National Biosafety Authority's Strategic Plan for implementation and coordination of Biosafety in Kenya. Advocacy efforts around the 2013 Year will also serve to advance the National Biosafety Authority strategic objective of supporting Institutional capacity in Kenya. Through the Strategic Plan the Authority strives to establish and facilitate a regulatory framework that supports scientific and socio- economic activities of genetically modified organisms at various levels in the country.

Following the government ban on GMOs in Kenya in 2012, the program, in collaboration with the International Service for the Acquisition of Agri-biotech Applications and Open Forum on Agricultural Biotechnology prepared and disseminated widely a policy brief on “ Deficiencies in Study Linking GM Maize to Cancer: Global Scientific Perspectives”. The brief re-affirmed the safety history of GMOs and demystified widely propagated fears and concerns

In addition, the program enhanced the capacity of parliamentarians to present credible, authoritative and evidence-based report in parliament with the goal of informing the lifting of the Cabinet ban on GMOs.

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