

## **Biosafety regulatory framework in Kenya**

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The National Biosafety Authority (NBA) was established pursuant to the provisions of the Biosafety Act No. 2 of 2009. The overarching mandate of NBA is to exercise general supervision and control over development, transfer, handling and use of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) so as to ensure safety of human and animal health and provide adequate protection of the environment. NBA is the competent authority of the Government of the Republic of Kenya and is the Focal Point of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety. The Authority regulates all activities involving GMOs in food, feed, research, industry, trade and environmental release. Since its inception in 2010, the Authority has developed a number of Regulations such as the Contained use Regulations, 2011 to guide research on GMOs, the Environmental release Regulations, 2011, Import, Export and Transit Regulations, 2011. The latest Regulations on Labeling GMOs that came into force as from May 2012 is intended to ensure that GMOs are clearly labeled so that consumers are made aware that the food, feed or product is genetically modified so that they can make informed choices and also to facilitate the traceability.

To assess for safety, NBA has established a transparent, science-based and predictable process for reviewing and making decisions on the development, transfer, handling and use of GMOs and related activities. This is based on risk assessment process anchored on internationally recognized agreements and Standards. Since its inception in 2010, NBA has approved a number of applications for contained use and confined field trials have been approved by the Authority. Among the products that are currently under confined field trials include; Bt-cotton, biofortified sorghum and virus resistant cassava, Bt-maize and water efficient maize for Africa. So far, there has been no application for environmental release although it is expected that some of the projects under containment may proceed to that stage in the near future.

Despite these developments, there are still misconceptions about GMO in the country. NBA intends to enhance understanding of the technology through public awareness campaigns and to establish a predictable science based and transparent system for the approval process. Challenges towards attainment of this objective will be discussed.

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