

# Status of Biotechnology and Biosafety in Malawi

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# Scope of the presentation

- ❑ Current situation
- ❑ CFT approval process
- ❑ Building of local capacity
- ❑ Challenges
- ❑ Opportunities
- ❑ Slides

## Current situation

Malawi has a functional biosafety regulatory framework in place comprising

- ❑ The Biosafety Act of 2002
- ❑ The Biosafety (Management of Genetically Modified Organisms) Regulations passed in 2007
- ❑ A National Biosafety Regulatory Committee responsible for reviewing applications established in September 2007

## Current situation cont..

- ❑ The National Biotechnology and Biosafety policy was approved by cabinet in 2008

Malawi has in place a workable biotechnology and biosafety regulatory system that opens the way for the country to conduct confined field trials for any genetically modified (GM) crops.

# Current situation cont...

Malawi has not commercialized any GM crop

Malawi has its first Confined Field Trial on Bt Cotton

# CFT approval process

- Applicant submits an application to Institutional Biosafety Committee for scrutiny to ensure it technically sound
- After review by IBC it is submitted to the National Biosafety Regulatory Committee
- Publication notification in two newspapers
- Review by NBRC or a team of experts
- Recommendation to the Minister responsible for Environment for approval
- Decision to the applicant.

## Building of local capacity

The focus of the botech in Malawi is:

- building capacity among decision makers, agricultural scientists, regulators and regulatory agencies
- Strengthening mechanisms for implementing Biosafety regulations
- Raising understanding of the role modern biotechnology can play in agricultural development among scientists and decision makers

# Building of local capacity

- A number of training activities to enhance local capacity have been conducted.
- A special forum of agricultural scientists from government, Universities and Institutions was convened as one way of building of critical mass of scientist capable of making sound science based decisions in biotech on behalf of the country.
  - NBRC members have been trained so that they have greater capacity to handle and process new application and manage compliance issues
  - Journalists/experts forum was convened at Bunda College to provide accurate information to the journalists and clear up any misconceptions



## Building of local capacity

- Members from EAD, PPS, SSU, Bunda, NCST have been trained in GM seed import procedures
- Biosafety Inspectors have been trained on how to conduct inspections using the Malawi Inspectors and Trial Managers Manuals
- There has been a continuous engagement of the media revolving around reporting of biotechnology activities in collaboration with ISAAA and local experts

## Building of local capacity cont...

- The Trial Manager and members of Institutional Biosafety Committee at Bunda College have been trained on preparation a Study Plan and compliance issues
- Members from key institutions have participated in a number of “seeing believing trips’ to Uganda, South Africa, USA and Burkina Faso
- Information from expert presentations and panel discussions is being developed into handouts
- A programme to bring key stakeholders to visit the CFT is being developed in collaboration with Bunda college

# Challenges

- New technology ... not all key stakeholders are on board
- Fear of blockage of export market
- Conflicting messages (policies) from regional organizations such as AU, SADC, COMESA
- Resistance from conventional breeders fearing being made redundant by the technology

## Challenges cont..

- Fear of monopoly of multinationals on seed supply;
- Managing misconceptions derived from foreign media (Seralin paper and banning of GM imports in Kenya)
- Managing expectations for CFT in food crops

# Opportunities

- Positive political will
- Functional Biosafety Regulatory framework in place
- Farmers through FUM and seed industry organisations advocating for the technology

# Completed Bt-Cotton Confined Field Trial (CFT) fence at Bunda College



# Trial Manager (TM) at sign post outside CFT fence





# EAD Staff (Bio-safety Regulators) briefing the Trial Manager (TM) and Principal Investigator (PI)





# The PI & TM Explaining the field layout of the Bt-Cotton CFT



# Field Staff marking planting stations



# Planting CFT with Representatives of Regulators, Inspectors and Monsanto





# Assessment of seed germination



# Promising crop of Bt Cotton



# EAD taking Regulators and Inspectors to the CFT site



Thank you for your attention