1st INTERNATIONAL WORKSHOP ON HARMONIZATION OF GMO DETECTION AND ANALYSIS IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND NOTRH AFRICA (MENA) REGION

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The African Union Approaches to Biosafety

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CONTEXT

- Initiated based on AU Summit Decision;
- Duration: December 2005-February 2011;
- Located in the Department of Human Resources Science and Technology of the African Union Commission;
- Support from GTZ/GiZ, EU and Member States.

OBJECTIVE

- Equip the AU with the necessary Capacity and effective instruments to support its Member States in implementing the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety and using the African Model Law on Biosafety;
- Ultimate aim to incorporate biosafety issues into the political and institutional frameworks of the AU and into its support's services for Member States.

PILLARS OF THE AFRICAN BIOSAFETY STRATEGY

- Capacity Building and Preparedness for International Negotiations;
- Awareness Raising and Information Exchange;
- Establishment and Strengthening of Institutional Frameworks;
- Policy and Legal Frameworks;
- International Cooperation;
- Sustainability Mechanism.

MAIN ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN

- Nine (9) African Preparatory Meetings before international negotiations on biosafety/biodiversity;
- Two (2) Regional Training Courses on biosafety in collaboration with RECs and Civil Society Organization;
- Seven (7) Issues Paper on Biosafety to support Member States' National Focal Point in implementation of Biosafety;
- Three (3) AU-RECs Regional Meetings to discuss Harmonization/Coordination of Biosafety Issues;

MAIN ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN (continued)

- Development of African Strategy on Biosafety;
- Revision of the African Model Law on Biosafety
- Establishment of a Technical Advisors Committee for the Project Activities;
- Creation of Biosafety web page on AU website
- Standard Partnership with Secretariat of the CBD to support Member States in international negotiations;
- Presentation of achievements to the AU Organs: Ext-AMCOST, AMCOST III-IV and AMCEN 12;
- Permanent Policy Officer of Biosafety integrated in the AUC Structure.

RESULTS/ACHIEVEMENTS

- Strong African positions to reflect African interest in international negotiations;
- More then 95 participants from 31 African countries benefited from the regional training courses on risk assessment and risk management of GMOs;
- Published materials/tools for the use of National Focal Points;
- Contribution in National Laws on biosafety;
- Consensus with RECs on the need of Coordination/Harmonization of biosafety issues with leading role of the AUC;
- Ongoing Partnership with EU-Joint Research Center on Harmonization of GMOs' Analysis & Detection;

RESULTS/ACHIEVEMENTS (continued)

- Development and Establishment of a Continental Coordination of Biosafety/Biotechnology, Phytosanitary Measures (SPS), Food Safety, Animal Health underway based on the Project experience;
- Member States borrowed from the Model Law and/or amended their National Law based on its revision;
- Ongoing interdepartmental collaboration to develop additional policy on biosafety;
- AU Organs Recommendations/Decisions;
- Sustainable cooperation with SCBD.

LESSONS LEARNT

- Regional Approach of Biosafety Issues is the best way for Africa, but may need the appropriate time;
- Networking and communication are strongly required but still needed to be technically improved in African Union;
- AUC-SCBD partnership is important for the cost effectiveness and the efficiency of implementation of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety in Africa;

LESSONS LEARNT (continued)

- Common position on biosafety and biotechnology issues is yet a big challenge in Africa, the approach could be based on a first step of general guidelines and strong emphasis on information sharing;
- It is increasingly understood that biotechnology and biosafety should dealt with in a complementary manner;

LESSONS LEARNT (continued)

- Investment of self funds of Member States is essential for the sustainability and the efficiency of a regional approach on biosafety in the African Union;
- The ongoing process on the African Union Authority will be a better context then the actual status of intergovernmental organization.

MAIN CHALLENGES

- Effective coordination/harmonization of Biosafety Issues in Africa;
- Getting Appropriate Funding from Member States;
- Appropriate Information Sharing;
- Misinformation on the AU-GTZ Biosafety Initiative.

WAY FORWARD

- Broadened mandate of the Biosafety Unit renamed Life and Earth Sciences Unit;
- Establishment Continental Coordination on Biosafety/Biotechnology, Phytosanitary Measures, Food Safety and Animal health;
- International Partnerships (CBD, EU-JRC);
- Capacity Building in Thematic Areas of Biosafety: Risk Assessment and Risk Management, Public Participation, Socio-economic Considerations.

PARTNERSHIP AUC/DHRST-EU/JRC

- 1st and 2nd International Workshop on Harmonization of GMO Detection and Analysis (Oct 2010, February 2012);
- EU-AU Network Roadmap 2012-2013: AU-Africa Networking, Reference Materials, Proficiency Testing, Capacity Building;
  - Participation of African Representatives to the Global Network Forum,
  - Africa Input to the Global Network Forum Agenda,
  - Organization of a 3rd EU-Africa Networking Workshop in 2013,
  - Mapping of GMO detection capacity in Africa,
  - Development of other regional networks in Africa in addition to SANGL,
  - Ultimately development of an ANGL (network of regional network);
- GMO Certified Materials available (for sale) from JRC;
- GMO Plasmid Control Samples available (for free) based on Material Transfert Agreement from EU-RL GMFF

PARTNERSHIP AUC/DHRST-EU/JRC (Continued)

- Increase participation of African labs to EU JRC Proficiency Testing rounds (in particular for qualitative detection);
- Mapping of GMO detection capacity at national level in order to clarify training needs;
- Identification of specific technical training based on country mapping;

PROGRESS REPORT

- **Planned African Representatives' Meeting back-to-back with the forthcoming Global Forum on GMO;**
- **Status of Responses to the questionnaire:**
  - **Central Africa: D R Congo (2 labs), Cameroon,**
  - **Eastern Africa: Sudan,**
  - **Southern Africa: Zimbabwe (2 labs), Swaziland.**

OTHER REGIONAL PROJECTS WITHIN THE AFRICAN UNION

- NEPAD AFRICAN BIOSAFETY NETWORK OF EXPERTISE
- WESTERN AFRICAN ECONOMIC MONETARY UNION REGIONAL PROJECT ON BIOSAFETY
- ECONOMIC COMMUNITY OF WESTERN AFRICAN STATES REGIONAL BIOTECHNOLOGY AND BIOSAFETY INITIATIVE
- REGIONAL AGRICULTURAL & ENVIRONMENTAL INITIATIVES NETWORK-AFRICA, SADC REGION (CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATION)

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION

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