

ABNE in Africa

Biosafety Capacity Building in Burkina Faso

With a functional biosafety system in place, Burkina Faso has approved the commercial release of Bt cotton in 2008 after completion of 6 years of field trials, and thus became the third country in Africa growing GM crops following South Africa and Egypt. In 2011, Bt cotton approximates 60% with about 250000 hectares cultivated.

Based on the success with Bt cotton, confined field trials of Bt cowpea began in July 2011 under the auspices of the National Agricultural Research Institute (INERA) in collaboration with the African Agricultural Technology Foundation (AATF). The Bt cowpea project involves three countries in West Africa: Nigeria, Ghana and Burkina Faso. In addition, the National Biosafety Competent Authority, the *Agence Nationale de Biosecurité* (ANB), is ready to review applications for the Biofortified Sorghum, which will then be the third GM crop to be introduced in the country.



Field visit: Participants and Resource Persons of the ABNE workshop on coexistence issues, Bobo-Dioulasso, November 2010.

The NEPAD Planning and Coordinating Agency, the technical arm of the African Union, signed an agreement with the Government of Burkina Faso in February 2010, to host the African Biosafety Network of Expertise (ABNE). The mission of ABNE is to assist African countries in building functional biosafety systems. The first node of ABNE was established on the campus of the University of Ouagadougou and was officially launched in April 2010. The agreement grants ABNE freedom to operate, with all the privileges and benefits, relevant activities to be undertaken towards empowering regulators and regulatory systems in Burkina Faso as well as in the other African Union member state countries. The table below gives an overview of the ABNE capacity building activities that benefited the regulators and stakeholders of Burkina Faso from 2009 to date.

Table 1: Summary of ABNE capacity building activities for Burkina Faso

Activity	Venue and date	Number of regulators/ stakeholders benefiting
Training workshop on Agricultural biotechnology	Dakar, July 2009	1
International meeting in Ouagadougou	Ouagadougou, April 2010	60
Workshop on Liability and Redress (L&R) workshop for deputies, government officials, scientists and other stakeholders	Ouagadougou, July 2010	30
COP M05 on Liability and Redress preparatory meeting	Nairobi, July 2010	1
Study tour	South Africa, November 2010	2
Training workshop on coexistence issues	Bobo-Dioulasso, November, 2010	60
E- Biosafety program	Italy & Ouagadougou, from July 2011	1
Internship	South Africa, November 2010	1
Science and Technology communication and Short Course	Michigan State University, August 2010 and 2011	2
Agricultural Biotechnology Short Course	Michigan State University, September 2011	2
Total		162

Overall, the ABNE capacity building programs have directly benefited 162 Burkina Faso regulators and stakeholders through activities organized in the country as well as activities outside the country where Burkinabe participants were sponsored.

Additionally, and based on requests from the ANB and/or its partners, ABNE has been providing the necessary expertise for activities conducted by ANB in collaboration with relevant initiatives such as the International Center for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology (ICGEB) and AATF and/or under the bilateral cooperation between Burkina Faso and countries such as the United States.

ABNE has also undertaken various initiatives at the diplomatic level in Burkina Faso so as to comply with the requirements of the status conferred by the host country agreement. For instance, the ABNE team initiated a series of visits to foreign Embassies and other diplomatic missions accredited to Burkina Faso. While these were courtesy visits, they gave ABNE an opportunity to explore sources of co-funding. In total, around 12 foreign missions in Ouagadougou were visited in 2010.



Farmer's day organized in July 2010 with ABNE participation, Kenedougou, Burkina Faso.

Main Impacts of the ABNE activities in Burkina Faso

Confidence and Trust built. In recognizing the relevance of ABNE interventions in the country, ABNE was recently requested to technically assist/prepare regulators in capturing the national biosafety regime and the key biosafety concepts and provisions that were internally agreed upon, at the recently adopted Nagoya Kula-Lumpur Supplementary Protocol on Liability and Redress. The process of incorporating these changes is in progress, and ABNE is in contact with the Ministry in charge to provide any assistance where need be. ABNE will also continue working with other biosafety initiatives to better contribute to this important process.

Next areas of focus for ABNE in Burkina Faso

Institutionalizing a Biosafety Short Course at a University in Burkina Faso. Based on the success encountered by ABNE in Burkina Faso, it is envisioned that Burkina Faso will develop and institutionalize an ABNE biosafety short course program for the Francophone African regulators. Towards this objective, discussions have started with the Polytechnic University of Bobo-Dioulasso which hosts the College of Rural Development, the *Institut de Développement Rural* that trains Agronomists and related specialists. Bobo-Dioulasso also hosts the largest cotton company in the country and the main agricultural research station, the "Farakoba-Station" where field trials of GM crops are conducted. A short course institutionalized at this university would provide participants with an opportunity to visit and interact with Burkinabe farmers growing GM crops and also with scientists conducting field trials.

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