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AFRICAN UNION DEVELOPMENT AGENCY

# ABNE

African Biosafety  
Network of Expertise

## Africa Biosafety Watch

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## Creating an Enabling Environment for Biosafety Regulation in Rwanda

Rwanda is committed to ensuring that the recently passed law governing biosafety in Rwanda is implemented in line with best practices. In view of this, the Rwanda Environment Management Authority (REMA), through the support provided by AUDA-NEPAD, recently hosted a three-day workshop in Kigali from 6 to 8 May 2024, focusing on enhancing biosafety regulation through the development of relevant orders as provided in the law. Attended by representatives from various stakeholders, including the Ministry of Environment, Rwanda Food and Drugs Authority (FDA), Rwanda Agriculture Board (RAB), and other relevant ministries, the workshop aimed to review the key regulatory orders essential for biosafety governance.

Central to the agenda was the review of the draft Prime Minister Order establishing the National Biosafety Committee and the draft Ministerial Order determining modalities for permit application, requirements, and procedures. These orders are crucial for implementing Rwanda's biosafety law, creating an enabling environment for biosafety

regulation.

Participants engaged in constructive discussions, aligning the drafts with the national biosafety law and standard best practices. Moving forward, the drafts will be improved based on feedback, validated, translated into the official languages, and submitted for approval. These follow-up actions emphasize the need for continued support and capacity strengthening of the regulators and relevant stakeholders on biosafety regulation in Rwanda.

AUDA-NEPAD, through the African Biosafety Network of Expertise, reiterates its continued support in ensuring that an enabling environment for biosafety regulation is created and sustained in Rwanda. This will contribute to increased agricultural productivity and better food and nutrition security thereby boosting the country's capacity towards overcoming its food safety and insecurity challenges, hence such support will fast-track the delivery of Africa's transformation as encapsulated in Agenda 2063.



## AUDA-NEPAD Supports GMO Regulations Drafting Workshop in Zimbabwe



Crop production in Zimbabwe is constrained by a host of biological and physical stresses including droughts exacerbated by climate change. Biotech crops also called genetically modified (GM) crops can alleviate some of these stresses if harnessed appropriately. The adoption of biotech crops comes with a set of rules and regulations to protect safety of the environment, and human and animal health.

AUDA-NEPAD's ABNE programme has been providing technical support to Zimbabwe in the past few years for the development of functional biosafety regulatory

systems in the country. From 24 to 27 June 2024, a technical team from ABNE was in Harare for a workshop to support the development of regulations for GMO containment, confinement, and general release, and the development of guidelines for genome editing.

Prof. Fanuel Tagwira, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education, Innovation, Science and Technology Development (MHTEISTD) officially opened the workshop. In attendance were 33 in-country regulators and stakeholders from the National Biosafety Authority and relevant government

institutions.

The workshop started with introductory presentations on the science of genetic modification and other genomic technologies and on GMO regulation in Zimbabwe. Then followed a drafting session devoted to developing consensus documents for regulating the containment, confinement, and environmental release of GMOs. This session was facilitated by Mr. Jameson Mukaratirwa, Director, Legislative Drafting, Office of the Attorney General.

The workshop was wrapped up on 27 June 2024 with the regulation ready for submission to the appropriate body for adoption and publication. It was agreed that subsequent meetings will be convened to specifically develop the genome editing component of the regulation which could not be addressed during this workshop.

Zimbabwe has made headways in recent years by commencing multi-location confined field trials of GM cotton. The National Biotechnology Authority Act has been in force since 2006 and the country adopted guidelines for regulation of agricultural biotechnology, and for the production of biofertilizers in 2018.

Once adopted, the newly developed guidelines on containment, confinement, and general release will complement the biosafety regulatory toolbox to allow the country to safely harness opportunities in biotechnology for agricultural development. Such a move aligns with the Aspirations of the African continent as stipulated under Agenda 2063, specifically in Aspiration -1 A prosperous Africa, based on inclusive growth and sustainable development and Goal -3 Healthy and well-nourished citizens.

## Deliberations on Guidelines for Review and Approval of GM Crops with Stacked Traits in Ethiopia

Like most of African countries, agriculture represents a key sector of economic growth in Ethiopia. However, crop agriculture is constrained by a host of biotic and physical stresses which has been exacerbated by climate change. Biotech crops also called genetically modified (GM) crops can enhance crop production and productivity through better management of stresses such as insect pests, weeds, and low moisture stress.

Ethiopia has made significant progress in testing and adoption of biotech crops including biotech crops with stacked traits. The country has put in

place the required legal instruments and institutional setup to adequately regulate the use of biotechnology.

However, the regulatory framework still needs to be complemented with measures that would help deal with other advanced and emerging technologies such as biotech crops with stacked traits and genome edited crops. In 2023, the National Biosafety Regulatory Authority of Ethiopia with support provided by AUDA-NEPAD developed draft guidelines for stacked traits GM events that needed validation by stakeholders before adoption and



publication. The validation workshop finally took place from 18 to 19 June 2024, in Addis Ababa.

The workshop was attended by 30 domestic participants. An AUDA-NEPAD Senior Programme Officer in attendance presented global practices for regulating stacked-traits GM events to refresh participants' memories. Thereafter, the draft guideline was presented and discussed. Valuable inputs from individual participants and working groups were incorporated to enrich the final draft. The next

steps of this process will include a final edition of the draft before submission for approval and publication.

Support provided by AUDA-NEPAD's biosafety programme in Ethiopia has so far significantly contributed to the country's advancement in the biosafety regulation which will allow Ethiopia to safely adopt crop biotechnologies and new breeding techniques (NBT) for agricultural development.

## **African Biosafety Network of Expertise (ABNE)**

**Africa-based, Africa-led and Africa-owned  
biosafety service provider**

*Building functional biosafety regulatory systems in Africa*

## AUDA-NEPAD Supports a Technical Consultative Meeting in Zambia



The National Biosafety Authority of Zambia in partnership with AUDA-NEPAD organized a stakeholders' consultative meeting to harmonize views on the development of regulatory guidelines for Genome Editing and Stacked Gene technologies in the country, from 6th to 7th June 2024 in Lusaka. 12 stakeholders from the areas of policy, academia, and regulation participated in the meeting.

The meeting specifically aimed to clarify how regulatory guidelines for Genome Editing and Stacked Gene Events could be incorporated into the draft biosafety legislation under review. It also sought to initiate national guidelines that can adequately regulate the use of the two gene technologies.

Constructive discussions during the meeting led to the adoption of the best approach to generate

a zero draft of the two guidelines (Genome Editing Guidelines & Guidelines for Stacked Gene events). The meeting also designed a road map for subsequent meetings. The National Biosafety Agency on its behalf, on behalf of the Ministry of Environment and Green Economy and other stakeholders, was highly appreciative of the technical support from AUDA-NEPAD.

The adoption of such regulatory instruments may pave the way for the safe use of genome editing and stacked gene technologies to significantly boost agricultural development in Zambia. The outcomes of the guidelines thus align with the Aspirations of the African continent as stipulated under Agenda 2063, specifically in Aspiration -1 A prosperous Africa, based on inclusive growth and sustainable development and Goal -3 Healthy and well-nourished citizens.