

A map of Lesotho is shown in the background, with a traditional beaded basket (Maboi Mahula) centered over it. The basket is filled with white beads and has a blue and white patterned top. The text is overlaid on the map.

**GMASSURE LAUNCH AND AWARENESS RAISING  
SYMPOSIUM**

**Status of Lesotho with respect  
to biotechnology and biosafety**

**Maboi Mahula**

**2 – 3 July 2014**

**Orion Velmore Hotel Estate, Pretoria**

# I. Background, Lesotho on GMOs

- In Lesotho, concern in GM maize last happen in 2002, that was of national coverage
- More than 650, 000.00 Basotho were threatened by famine that hit Southern Africa
- International community responded with food packages of maize
- Based on the negative issues that revolved around GM products in those days, Lesotho accepted the food aid on grounds that it was first milled to avoid introduction into the environment

## II. Current Situation

- a) International obligation
  - Signed the Biosafety Protocol, 2003
- b) More over, Lesotho has participated United Nation Environment Programme – Global Environment Facility (UNEP-GEF) Projects
  - Development of NBFs
    - i. Biosafety Bill 2005, reviewed to Biosafety Bill 2014
    - ii. Biosafety Policy
  - Implementation of NBFs
    - Capacitate Lesotho technically & institutionally

# III. Interim Arrangement

“Biosafety Policy” is the working document with interim arrangement for handling applications until Biosafety Bill is enacted into Law

# IV. Stocktaking Analysis, 2012

## Key Findings

- No laboratories could conduct risk assessments
- No research (laboratory) and trials ( confined and contained)
- Erosion of experts out of the country
- The local seed dealers who were consulted did not know if they stored and sold seeds were genetically modified

# V. Level of Awareness

- national survey to determine the level of biotechnology and biosafety awareness was undertaken by the Department of Environment between May 2012 and June 2012.
- The pool of study included the academia, farmers, NGOs, regional and international organizations, government institutions, media and the private sector.

# VII. Level of Awareness Cont'd

## Key Findings

- Nearly half of the population surveyed (49%) were aware of modern biotechnology
- The survey found that 70% of population surveyed were not aware of any biosafety issues or concerns associated with modern biotechnology or GMOs

# VIII. Public Awareness

- National biotechnology and biosafety awareness strategy
- Produced and disseminated Information, Education and Communication (IEC) materials
- Workshops for training-of-trainers
- Opened social media account, for younger generation
- Developed Environment online forum
- Secured radio slot every Thursday, National Radio
- Awareness campaigns e.g. workshops and public gathering, school visits



# Challenges, National Level

- Lack of funding
- Technicality of Biotechnology
- Too many radio stations with clearly political affiliations
- Lesotho is mountainous country, villages widespread
- Current government interests
- No local active Non-Governmental Organizations to advocate for GM

## Recommended Approach to Raise Awareness

There is a need to;

- use local language
- use a medium that is suitable for each group of stakeholder
- involve associations, e.g. consumers, farmers
- use independent information bureaus
- undertake initiatives of awareness at early age
- a public debate must be encouraged

**Thank You**  
**KEA LEBOHA**

