



ZIMBABWE



Status of Biotechnology & Biosafety in Zimbabwe

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BACKGROUND OF NBA

- Formerly Biosafety Board of Zimbabwe.
- Established through National Biotechnology Authority Act, [*Chap. 14.31*] of 2006.
- To ensure safe application of biotech in specific priority areas of agriculture, medicine, energy and environment
- Our powers as an Authority are vested in the Act



NATIONAL BIOSAFETY STRUCTURE

Minister for Higher Education, Science and Technology
Development

National Biotechnology Board

National Biotechnology Authority

Chief Executive Officer


Regulatory Affairs

Research and
Development

Public Awareness
and Education



NBA FOCUS AREAS

- To support the development of biosafety and biotech R & Development
 - To ensure biosafety and biosecurity in deployment of biotechnology
 - Guided by NBA Act 2006, UN security council resolution 1540, CBD
 - To promote public understanding & participation in biosafety and biotech & its responsible use.
 - To mobilize resources & support biotech-led development
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ZIMBABWE ACHIEVEMENTS

- Legal biosafety framework and supporting guidelines are in place
 - National focal point on BCH of the Cartagena protocol
 - IACHM
 - CBD
- Public awareness, education and training is in progress
- capacity building programmes in collaboration with universities, and other institutions such as ABNE, UNEP-GEF (Low level)
- Mechanisms for regulation & promotion of biotech in Zimbabwe
- Research milestone e.g. SIRDC, Agri-Biotech, TRB

NBA SERVICES

○ As an Authority

- Import/export permits
 - Registration & Audit of Biotech facilities
 - Biosafety policy development
 - Risk assessment of potentially harmful or unintentional release of GMOs, into environment
 - Supervising CFTs.
 - Capacity building training for biosafety courses like risk assessment
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BIOTECHNOLOGY R & D

- Zimbabwe has not yet approved the commercialization of GM crops or animals
 - Confined field trials for *Bt* maize and cotton conducted from 2001 – 2005
 - Importation of GM positive material is highly regulated
- Research milestones
 - SIRDC, SIRDA maize (drought tolerant) and dwarf maize
 - WEMA ,CYMMT
 - UZ
 - HIT



NBA STACKHOLDERS

- Out of 15 universities, 4 offering biotech programs
 - UZ: MSc Biotech
 - NUST: MSc Microbiology and Biotech
 - CUT: BSc Honours in Biotech
 - HIT: Btech in Biotech

OTHERS

- Research institutes
- Science councils
- Small scale farmers
- industry



LEVEL OF AWARENESS

- Most of our stakeholders are ignorant about biotechnology. A survey by Masekesa (2012):
 - 79% of Harare residents could not define what is a GMO.
 - 21% who properly defined a GMO claimed to have read in a newspaper, heard it from a radio program or internet.
- A lot still needs to be done to educate the public on GMOs and biotech
- Extension of awareness to industry is key



PUBLIC AWARENESS ACTIVITIES

- Riding on the success of the Legislators Biotechnology Awareness workshop (COMESA/ACTESSA , 2014)
 - Radio interviews
 - Newspaper articles
 - Legislators visit to NBA, Malawi, Burkina faso, South Africa
- OFAB (Open forum for agricultural biotechnology) workshops, AfricaBio
 - Limited funding to augments awareness activities



PUBLIC AWARENESS ACTIVITIES

○ Exhibitions

- ZITF (Annual event)
- Harare Agricultural Show (Annual event)
- Science Engineering & Technology (SET) week (Annual event)

Other events

- Careers Day,
- Farmers events (e.g.) ZCFU congress



PROBLEMS IN AWARENESS

- Limited resources for reaching out to a wider stakeholder constituency of:
 - Industry
 - Primary/secondary school
 - Small scale farming communities
- Lack of simplified reading material in local languages for the public
- Anti-GMO movements spread falsehoods
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RECOMMENDED APPROACHES IN RAISING AWARENESS

- Mobilization of resources for awareness activities:
 - Including production of reading material for public including school going age groups and National essay writing competitions
 - Consumers and farmers
- Refresher courses/Training on biosafety and science communication:
 - staff , university students and other stakeholders
 - Industry
- Exhibiting in Rural Agricultural shows/farmer meetings.



THE END

Thank you

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