

Need and Importance of Biosafety Legislation in Uganda

Why is Biotechnology and Biosafety legislation important?

- ❖ Improved technologies and research are key to driving Uganda's Growth and Development across all sectors (National Biotechnology and Biosafety Policy 2008, Science, Technology and Innovation Policy, 2009, National Development Plan, 2010)
- ❖ Products of modern agricultural biotechnology have two decades of safe use and are yielding benefits to farmers, the general population and national economies. Developing countries (South Africa, India, Brazil, Egypt, Burkina Faso) are leading the way in the adoption of this technology
- ❖ The technology is regulated to optimise benefits and minimise any potential risks
- ❖ Uganda signed (2000) and ratified (2001) the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety. This international obligation requires Uganda to establish a functional legal system to manage biotechnology
- ❖ Uganda is conducting many experimental field tests of crops produced with biotechnology. Many are approaching the stage of commercialization. A law is required to advance to this stage and to provide legal mandate for Uganda's regulatory agencies (NEMA, UNCST, MAAIF, UNBS, etc)
- ❖ Over 25 trade partners of Uganda are using the products of biotechnology. An explicit legislation is needed to guide any such trade
- ❖ Many African countries have laws in place that govern the use of this technology (Kenya, South Africa). Nigeria and Ghana's have recently passed biosafety laws which are awaiting Presidential Assent
- ❖ Uganda is behind in the process as compared to other developing countries and many of its African neighbours, and yet our borders are porous.



Government commitment

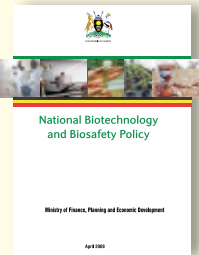
- ❖ The Government of Uganda is committed to the safe utilisation of biotechnology as a strategic innovation that can contribute to the country's economic growth and development

The Cabinet approved the National Biotechnology and Biosafety Policy in April 2008

- ❖ The policy was a product of a wide stakeholder consultative process and provides a framework for safe development and utilisation of biotechnology in the relevant sectors of Uganda's economy

- ❖ The goal of the policy is to contribute to national goals of poverty eradication, improved health care, food security, industrialisation and the protection of the environment through the safe application of biotechnology

- ❖ The Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development (Government Ministry responsible for Science and Technology) is preparing appropriate legislation on biotechnology and biosafety in line with this policy.



Objectives of the National Biotechnology and Biosafety Policy 2008

- ❖ To build and strengthen national capacity in biotechnology research, development and application
- ❖ To promote the utilisation of biotechnology products and processes as tools for national development
- ❖ To provide a regulatory and institutional framework for safe and sustainable biotechnology development and application
- ❖ To promote ethical standards in biotechnology research and development.



“Policy seeks to promote safe use of biotech for national development”

Biosafety Legislation

- ❖ The National Biotechnology and Biosafety Policy 2008, section 5.3 obligates Government of Uganda to establish an act for the safe development and application of biotechnology—the National Biotechnology and Biosafety Act.
- ❖ This act shall spell out the institutional mandates, functions and administrative roles for effective and safe development and utilisation of biotechnology for national development.
- ❖ As noted above, the Government of Uganda under the championship of the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development and the National Council for Science and Technology has since the year 2008 when the policy was approved been undertaking the process preparing this legislation for tabling in Parliament.

Why Ministry of Finance?

- ❖ R&D is regulated under the Uganda National Council for Science and Technology Statute (Cap 209)
- ❖ UNCST is a semi-autonomous institution under the Ministry of Finance and is the Government agency spearheading this legislation
- ❖ Biotechnology is a science that is cross cutting and applicable in fields of environment, agriculture, health, and industry among others, placement of UNCST in the Ministry of Finance is a government policy decision.

“UNCST, under Ministry of Finance, is responsible for S&T regulation”

Challenge

- ❖ The Challenge has been that the process has rather progressed much slowly and yet research within different research institutions is progressing very fast in an effort to address challenges such as the banana bacterial wilt disease and brown streak virus disease of cassava.
- ❖ The law is therefore required to enable scientists pass on the technologies they have generated to benefit the public, while public safety is ensured through attendant regulations arising from this law.

A Final Call

As stakeholders, we are called upon to play our respective roles to ensure that the process of drafting a bill on biotechnology legislation, its tabling and subsequent enactment is expedited.

“Biotechnology legislation will optimise benefits of biotech while minimising any potential risks”

Published by:

Uganda Biotechnology and Biosafety Consortium (UBBC)

c/o Uganda National Council for Science and Technology

Plot 6, Kimera Road, Ntinda, Kampala

P. O. Box 6884 Kampala

Tel: +256 772 585211

+256 712 935664

Email: ubbconsortium@gmail.com

