



Kick-off meeting of the BiosafeTrain-project, March 2005, Nairobi

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# BiosafeTrain

“Capacity Building for Biosafety and Ecological Impact  
Assessment of Transgenic Plants in East Africa”

ENRECA-Project  
Financed by DANIDA

2004-2007

Involving

**University of Nairobi**  
**Kenya Agricultural Research Institute**  
**Makerere University**  
**University of Dar es Salaam**  
**Royal Veterinary and Agricultural University**  
**Danish Institute of Agricultural Sciences**

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Food security is a major concern in Africa, and there is an urgent need for tools to increase crop production on this continent. Gene technology may be one of the many tools that may be used. However, one of the main obstacles to adaptation of this technology, vividly demonstrated recently by the genetically modified (GM)-maize food aid crisis in southern Africa, is the lack of capacity to assess the agricultural and ecological impacts of introducing GM crops. There is, therefore, need for capacity building within the field of risk assessment/risk analysis.

The BioSafeTrain-project, funded by the programme on Enhancement of Research Capacity (ENRECA), Danida, is a collaborative project between partners in Denmark and three East African countries. The project started in December 2004 and Phase 1 (3-y) of this project is ongoing.

The long-term vision of the project is to build up capacity to cope with the challenges of introducing genetically modified crops in East Africa by developing a platform for capacity building on biosafety impact assessment of transgenic plants. In the first period we aim to:

- Develop a training platform structure, a Biosafety Training Laboratory, where students and other relevant persons from East African countries can supplement their education with extra degrees or training on GM plant biosafety/ecological risk assessment.
- Offer MSc and PhD-level educational training on agricultural and environmental impacts of GM plants, through joint African-Danish supervision at the local universities/research institutes
- Offer a Diploma in Biosafety, as part of the existing education initiatives at certain universities.

- Organise the Biosafety Training Laboratory, as an international “centre without walls” —with adequate facilities for practical risk assessment training.
- Improve existing capacity with regard to infrastructure by upgrading current biotechnology/biosafety facilities.
- Test and revise suggested standard procedures for GM plant biosafety.
- Develop a research agenda adapted to local conditions on relevant biosafety topics, and during this process also generate new knowledge in order to realize this agenda.

The details for the Biosafety Training Laboratory are currently being specified. Once completed, this will consist of facilities for training at the Universities of Nairobi and Dar es Salaam, a confinement glasshouse established at KARI and a quarantine facility at Makerere University that the project group may use in collaboration.

The first graduate research projects have been determined on and training (4 PhD- and 6 MSc-fellowships) starts medio 2005.

Subjects for the first training courses have been selected, and the courses are under development. They will focus on biosafety/ecology, biotechnology, practical aspects in the cultivation and handling of GM crops, risk assessment and evaluation, and the broader societal aspects. We intend to offer the first diploma course in early 2006.

For further information about the project, please visit our website: **[www.biosafetrain.dk](http://www.biosafetrain.dk)**