

BiosafeTrain News

Issue 9,

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Dear Colleagues,

Welcome to our ninth issue of BiosafeTrain News.

New members have joined the team and we have been involved in a number of activities in the region.

Some of the activities included joint collaborations in training biosafety, sponsoring and co-organising conferences. You can read about these below.

Have a pleasant new year.

Best wishes,

Joy Owango, Editor.

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PEOPLE AND CHANGES

Dr. Flemming Ekelund



Dr. Flemming Ekelund, from the University of Copenhagen, Institute of Biology, has joined the Steering Committee. He is a soil biologist with a special interest in decomposition and plant nutrient turnover. His involvement will boost our expertise in these areas, now central to several ongoing PhD and MSc projects.

Dr. Muo Kasina



Dr. Muo Kasina has been appointed as BiosafeTrain Deputy Coordinator at Kenya Agricultural Research Institute, Dr. Kasina's research is on pest management and pollination, as well as apiculture and the application of bioinformatics in pest and bee research.

Dr. Jenipher Bisikwa



Dr. Jenipher Bisikwa has been appointed as BiosafeTrain Deputy Coordinator in Uganda. Dr Bisikwa is a weed scientist, mainly interested in understanding the biology and ecology of weedy species and the use of such information to design effective and sustainable weed management strategies. She supervised a student on the Risk Assessment of herbicide resistant (IR) maize in Striga management in the first phase of the project, a role that she will continue, apart from a closer involvement in the overall management of BiosafeTrain.

Dr. Sylvester Lyantagaye



Dr. Sylvester Lyantagaye has joined BiosafeTrain as Deputy Coordinator in Tanzania, to replace Dr. Flora Ismail, who is now the Coordinator. Dr. Lyantagaye teaches biotechnology courses at the University of Dar es Salaam. His research interests include studying plant-produced molecules that could have medicinal potential or be beneficial in food production.

Editor's note

You will soon be able to read a more extended personal and professional profile of the new SC members on our website, www.biosafetrain.dk.

REGIONAL AND WORLDWIDE

BiosafeTrain at Nairobi University Biochemistry Students Association Dinner Workshop

BiosafeTrain was invited to the Annual Nairobi University Biochemistry Students Association (NUBSA) Dinner Workshop on Biotechnology, held on 7 August, 2009 at the Safari Park Hotel, Nairobi. The theme for the workshop was Modern Biotechnology in Health and Development. James Kanya, a BiosafeTrain PhD student at the University of Nairobi, gave a presentation on the project's achievements in the first and second phases.

BiosafeTrain at CEBIB Workshop

Communications Manager Joy Owango participated in a workshop organized by the Centre for Biotechnology and Bioinformatics (CEBIB), University of Nairobi. CEBIB has a mandate for capacity building in outreach and biotechnology awareness.

The theme of the workshop was on *Biosafety Law potential impact on Agricultural Biotechnology Development in Kenya*. The purpose of the workshop was to bring together senior researchers, regulators and policy makers in biotechnology and biosafety to reflect on (in the longer term) institutionalizing biotechnology policy in Government & Research & Academic institutions in Kenya.

BiosafeTrain at the 1st Students Regional Biotechnology Conference in Nairobi

The 1st Students' Regional Biotechnology Conference took place in Nairobi 25-27 November 2009. The meeting was organised by the Biochemistry and Biotechnology Students Association of Kenya (BBSAK). BiosafeTrain was one of the sponsors and also managed the biosafety component in the conference.

PhD students James Kanya and Jane Tei Ringera from the University of Nairobi were invited to give a talk. The title of James' contribution was *Dispersal distance of the rice (Oryza sativa) pollen*, while Jane talked about *Competition between the cultivated rice (Oryza sativa) and wild rice (Oryza punctata) in Kenya*.

BBSAK, that plans to expand membership to the East African region wanted to provide a platform where young scientists can train themselves to spur socio-economic development in the region through biotechnological applications.

Joint Biosafety workshop in Uganda

From 19 to 23 October 2009, a training workshop, *Introduction to GMO Biosafety Risk Assessment* was hosted by the Faculty of Agricultural Sciences, Makerere University, Kabanyolo Campus, and Kampala, Uganda. The workshop was the result of collaboration between BiosafeTrain and the International Centre for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology (ICGEB). Our former PhD student Dennis Obonyo, now the Biosafety Coordinator at ICGEB, was one of the organisers.

The five-day course focused on experimental design, but also covered topics on: biosafety in a legal and regulatory context, with emphasis on Africa; the authorisation process; risk analysis and problem formulation; assessment and management of identified risks to humans and the environment; agricultural biotechnological techniques; and management of quarantine facilities.

Thirty one participants attended the course: ten from Kenya, seven from Uganda, four from Tanzania, two from Nigeria and Botswana, and one each from Togo, South Africa and Madagascar.

The teachers were colleagues from BiosafeTrain, supplemented by three invited guests: Dr. Gösta Nachmann (Copenhagen University, Denmark), Dr. Alan Gray (National Environment Research Council, UK), and Prof. Michael Wilkinson (Aberystwyth University, Wales, UK).

New papers by BiosafeTrain Scientists

Howe A, Lövei GL, Nachman G. 2009. Dummy caterpillars as a simple method to assess predation rates on invertebrates in a tropical agro ecosystem. *Entomologia Experimentalis et Applicata* 131, 325-329.

– Andy was attached to BiosafeTrain but supported by a special MSc development grant from DANIDA. He successfully defended his MSc Thesis in March 2009, and this is his first article from the MSc project, describing the technique he used to study predation intensity in cotton in Uganda.

Lövei GL, Andow DA, Arpaia S. 2009. Transgenic insecticidal crops and natural enemies: a detailed review of laboratory studies. *Environmental Entomology* 38, 293-306.

– A new and updated analysis of laboratory tests on natural enemies. This supersedes an earlier, much-cited similar review, by Lövei & Arpaia (Ent. Exp. Appl, 2005)

Andow DA, Lövei GL, Arpaia S. 2009. Cry toxins and proteinase inhibitors in transgenic plants do have non-zero effects on natural enemies in the laboratory: *Environmental Entomology*, 38, 1528-1532.

– The authors of the article above respond to criticism about methodology and the disagreement over the main thrust of the review.

Kanya J, Kinyamario JI, Amugune NO, Hauser TP. 2009. Dispersal distance of rice (*Oryza sativa* L.) pollen at the Tana River delta in the coast province, Kenya: *African Journal of Biotechnology* 8, 2265-2270.

IMPRESSIONS OF BIOSAFETRAIN ACTIVITIES IN LATE 2009



Participants of the 1st Students Regional Biotechnology Conference held in Nairobi. BiosafeTrain was a coorganiser and sponsor.



The participants at the biosafety workshop organized by BiosafeTrain and ICGEB held in Kabanyolo Campus, Makerere University



Group work session at the biosafety workshop organised by BiosafeTrain and ICGEB.



Two of the biosafety workshop trainers. Left: Dr. Alan Gray (National Environment Research Council, UK). Right: Prof Michael Wilkinson



BiosafeTrain PhD student Jane Tei Ringera presents her talk at the 1st Students Regional Biotechnology Conference.