



PRESS RELEASE

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NEW BIOSAFETY AND ECOLOGICAL RISK ASSESSMENT PROJECT IN EAST AFRICA

As food security is a major concern in Africa, there is an urgent need for tools to increase crop production on this continent. It is believed gene technology may be one of the many tools that may be used. Unfortunately, adoption is hampered by lack of capacity to assure safe use of such crops.

Hence the creation of BiosafeTrain – a biosafety and ecological risk assessment project. BiosafeTrain's long-term vision is to build up capacity to cope with the challenges of introducing genetically modified crops in East Africa. BiosafeTrain is a collaboration with scientists from the University of Nairobi and Kenya Agricultural Research Institute in Kenya, Makerere University in Uganda, University of Dar es Salaam in Tanzania, and the universities of Aarhus and Copenhagen in Denmark. The programme is an Enhancement of Research Capacity (ENRECA), funded by DANIDA. The project started in December 2004 and Phase2 begins in December 2007.

During the projects' period BiosafeTrain aims to improve infrastructural capacity by upgrading existing biosafety or biotechnology facilities. It offers MSc and PhD fellowships in biosafety, with joint African-Danish supervision at local universities and perform relevant research projects locally. The project will also develop a training program where students and other relevant persons from East African countries can receive practical training on GM plant biosafety.

Currently ten students are training for MSc and PhD degrees in the 3 East African countries and construction facilities is underway . An additional block is being built to the existing biosafety-level 2 glasshouse at the Kenya Agricultural Research Institute. This new block is specifically designed to be insect-proof to allow biosafety work using arthropods. While an Arthropod Quarantine and Biosafety Laboratory was built and is being equipped at Kabanyolo Campus, Makerere University, Uganda. This will be the second such facility in East Africa.

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