



PRESS RELEASE

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BIOSAFETRAN AND ICGEB CONDUCT TRAINING ON GMO BIOSAFETY RISK ASSESSMENT

From 19 to 23 October 2009, an “*Introduction to GMO Biosafety Risk Assessment*” biosafety training workshop was hosted and conducted at the Faculty of Agricultural Sciences, Makerere University, Kabanyolo Campus, Kampala, Uganda. The workshop is the result of a collaboration between BiosafeTrain and the International Centre for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology (ICGEB).

The course was held for five days and the programme 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; experimental design; and management of quarantine facilities.

Since many Eastern African countries are currently involved in research and development of Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs), this course is designed to provide participants with an introduction to key biosafety issues in GMO risk assessment, so that they will acquire basic skills in the use of scientific data to draw balanced and science-based conclusions regarding the experimental release of GMOs. The course is aimed at biosafety regulatory officials and scientists working in national research institutions.

About BiosafeTrain

BiosafeTrain (www.biosafetrain.dk) is a DANIDA-funded Enhancement of Research Capacity (ENRECA) project that assists East African countries to make informed, responsible decisions about the adoption of transgenic plants by enhancing their capacity in the area of biosafety and ecological impact assessment. BiosafeTrain collaborates 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 Aarhus and Copenhagen Universities in Denmark.

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 performs relevant research projects locally. The project started in December 2004 and is currently in its second phase. The expected duration is 9-12 years by which time the collaborating countries will have trained personnel, protocols and facilities that enables them to fulfill their obligations under the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety.

About ICGEB

The International Centre for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology (ICGEB) provides a scientific and educational environment of the highest standard and conducts innovative research in life sciences for the benefit of developing countries. It strengthens the research capability of its Members through training and funding programmes and advisory services and represents a comprehensive approach to promoting biotechnology internationally. In 1997, the ICGEB established its Biosafety Unit, tasked to disseminate as widely as possible significant information related to biosafety issues raised through the use of products derived from modern biotechnology, as well as to assist ICGEB Member States in their capacity to identify, regulate, manage and monitor those products within their own Countries.

The ICGEB was awarded a grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to help support the development of effective safety and regulatory systems for biotechnology in sub-Saharan Africa. Working primarily out of its new Capetown facility, the ICGEB is creating regional focal points on biosafety, organising practical workshops, offering fellowships and providing funds to encourage participation in regional and international conferences, developing and fostering links with the international scientific community.

For more information contact:

Joy Owango

Communications Manager
BiosafeTrain Project University of Aarhus,
Faculty of Agricultural Sciences
Flakkebjerg Res Ctr., Slagelse, Denmark
East African Office: Gecaga Institute Bldg.,
Chiromo Campus, University of Nairobi, Kenya
Landline: +254 (0)20 4777132/4777118
Cell: +254 (0)733 792316
Email: joy.owango@agrsci.dk
Website: www.biosafetrain.dk

Decio Ripandelli

Director, Administration and External Relations
Secretary of the ICGEB Board of Governors
International Centre for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology (ICGEB)
Padriciano, 99 - 34012, Trieste, ITALY
Tel: +39-040-3757345
Fax: +39-040-3757363
Email: decio@icgeb.org
Website: <http://www.icgeb.org>