



## Kenya Agricultural Biotechnology Outreach Support Program

### What is the Kenya Agricultural Biotechnology Support Program?

USAID's Kenya Agricultural Biotechnology Outreach Support Program is educating young scientists, the general public, policymakers, and the media about biotechnology and biosafety. USAID provides funding to the University of Nairobi's Center for Biotechnology and Bioinformatics to strengthen and increase outreach about the Biotechnology sector in Kenya. Parliamentarians and other policy makers are given the facts and information they need in order to effectively engage in discussions and debates about biotechnology. In addition, the Center is working to increase the level of balanced reporting and counter negative assumptions and misperceptions about biotechnology by helping journalists to better understand the issues and report on the facts.



Photo: USAID/Kenya

*Increasing yields and pest resistance of staple crops such as maize are important to Kenya's future as a food secure nation.*

### Project Duration and Budget

August 2007 – August 2012  
\$500,000

### Who implements the Kenya Agricultural Biotechnology Support Program?

University of Nairobi  
[www.uonbi.ac.ke](http://www.uonbi.ac.ke)

### Where does the Kenya Agricultural Biotechnology Support Program work?

Nationally

### What does the Kenya Agricultural Biotechnology Support Program do?

The program improves knowledge and awareness among biotech stakeholders, encourages balanced reporting on biotechnology and biosafety in electronic and print media, and increases knowledge about biotechnology and biosafety among key policy makers in government, members of parliament, and leaders of public institutions.

The program provides hands-on training for scientists, as well as professional meetings and roundtable discussions.

Workshops, public lectures and debates with experts and stakeholders increase awareness about the value of biotechnology and the potential gains to the economy and overall food security in Kenya.

Farmer vocational training programs are complemented by a publicly accessible website with biotech information, brochures and information booklets.

In addition, the Center helps to organize biotechnology exhibitions at the provincial agricultural shows hosted at Nairobi, Kisumu, Kakamega, Embu, Mombasa, Eldoret, Nakuru and Garissa. The exhibitions include a variety of public outreach materials and include interviews and questionnaires to raise people's awareness and gauge perceptions on biotechnology in each province.

### How is the Kenya Agricultural Biotechnology Support Program making a difference?

In 2010-2011, a total of 2,104 participants received information on biotechnology and biosafety, including facts on genetically modified organisms. Seven hundred brochures with biotech information were distributed.

The Center's website provides relevant scientific information on biotechnology and engages stakeholders in discussion.

Five national newspapers stories in early 2012 reported on the potential of biotechnology to improve agricultural yields.

In early 2012, the program has educated 621 people on biotechnology issues through a series of workshops. Survey data collected pre-and post-workshops demonstrated attitudinal change among the participants. For example, the data showed a marked increase post-workshop in the level of understanding and awareness of biotechnology and genetic engineering and related safety issues, a reduction in the resistance to the production and consumption of genetically modified crops, and an increase in support for the introduction of genetically modified maize and cotton.

### **What key challenges does the Kenya Agricultural Biotechnology Support Program face?**

Although GM technology is not yet being applied in any agricultural production system in Kenya, it has the potential to increase food security and improve nutrition. The current level of understanding and acceptance of biotechnology and genetically modified crops is low, not only among the general public but among critical stakeholders like farmers, agricultural producers, and Kenyan lawmakers. The Center is working to counter misperceptions and resistance to biotechnology in agriculture through its outreach efforts.

### **The Kenya Agricultural Biotechnology Support Program in action**

Five biotechnology outreach workshops were held in early 2012 with farmers, farmer organizations, agricultural extension staff, consumer networks, agriculture teachers and students, the media, biotech research scientists, government policy advisors, and Central, Provincial and District Agricultural Boards. The workshop topics included the Biotech awareness program, its achievements so far, the scientific basis for the safety of genetically modified products, the potential uses of biotechnology for increased crop and animal production, and the regulation and management of genetically modified organisms. The purpose of the workshops is to enable a variety of stakeholders to participate more effectively and knowledgeably in the ongoing debates about biotechnology.

### **For more information:**

#### **Prof. James Ochanda**

University of Nairobi

Coordinator, Centre for Biotechnology & Bioinformatics (CEBIB)

Email: [jochanda@uonbi.ac.ke](mailto:jochanda@uonbi.ac.ke)

#### **Samson Okumu, AOR**

USAID/Kenya

Agriculture, Business and Environment Office

Tel: +254 208 622 702

Email: [sokumu@usaid.gov](mailto:sokumu@usaid.gov)