



## Program for Biosafety Systems

### What is the Program for Biosafety Systems?

The Program for Biosafety Systems (PBS), managed by the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) and funded by USAID in partnership with the Government of Kenya, supports the development and use of biosafety systems to enhance agricultural innovation in Kenya. PBS addresses biosafety through research, capacity development, and outreach and works with stakeholders to develop and implement biosafety systems that ultimately expand producer choice, inspire consumer confidence, facilitate trade, and promote agricultural research and development.



Photo: USAID/IFPRI

*Dr. Washington Otieno of USAID/Kenya speaks at training course for senior NEMA officers on communicating biosafety issues*

### Project Duration and Budget

October 2010 - September 2013  
\$ 600,000

### Who implements the Program for Biosafety Systems?

International Food Policy Research Institute

[www.ifpri.org](http://www.ifpri.org)

National Biosafety Authority Kenya

[www.biosafetykenya.go.ke](http://www.biosafetykenya.go.ke)

International Service for the Acquisition of Agri-biotech Applications

[www.isaaa.org](http://www.isaaa.org)

### Where does the Program for Biosafety Systems work?

PBS's coverage is nationwide. Outreach and agricultural extension officers are stationed in Rift Valley and Coast provinces. District officers are located in the Ministry of Public Health, Kenya Bureau of Standards, and the National Environmental Management Authority.

### What does the Program for Biosafety Systems do?

PBS supports the development and implementation of national biosafety systems throughout Kenya through partner-driven activities and initiatives, including:

#### Strengthening the national biosafety system in Kenya

- Initiated development of biosafety implementing regulations, which were adopted in 2011.
- Provided leadership in development and adoption of a coordination framework that delineates the regulatory mandates of various agencies.
- Supports the NBA, including training staff and Board members.

#### Facilitating progress in biotechnology development through regulatory support

- Developed a comprehensive manual and standard operating procedures for the sound conduct of confined field trials (CFTs) for biotech crop plants.
- Spearheaded development and adoption of crop-specific CFT guidelines and crop biology documents that inform regulatory decision-making.
- Provides regulatory support to a coalition of governmental, non-governmental and business organizations working toward the general release of insect-resistant biotech cotton.

#### Enhancing the communication capacity of senior policymakers and regulators

- Organizes training courses on communicating the potential risks and benefits of biotechnology.
- In partnership with national and international organizations, provides support for stakeholder forums such as BioAWARE and the Open Forum on Agricultural Biotechnology.

### How is the Program for Biosafety Systems making a difference?

- Advocated for the Biosafety Act in 2009 which establishes the institutional and legal governance for biotechnology and biosafety in Kenya.
- Supports multi-location trials and the commercial release of promising biotech products, including insect-resistant maize and cotton. The first application for commercial release is expected in 2012.
- 107 policy makers and communicators trained in communications on risks and benefits of biotechnology.
- PBS international team provides Kenyan partners access to global expertise on technical and regulatory issues.

### **What key challenges does the Program for Biosafety Systems face?**

Public debate and media controversy follow biotechnology and biosafety decision-making. Strong opposition and heightened negative reporting from anti-biotechnology lobby groups preceding enactment of the Biosafety Act in 2009 aimed to obstruct the legislative process. PBS coalition building and joint message development based on scientific information was essential in providing timely responses. An ongoing and concerted communications strategy is essential to respond to emerging needs and challenges presented by enactment of the NBA.

### **The Program for Biosafety Systems in Action**

The Government of Kenya's June 2011 decision to authorize importation of genetically modified maize to address severe food shortages in Kenya and neighboring countries met with significant criticism from media and the Kenyan Parliament.

The controversy delayed the distribution of food aid and food shortages and starvation continued. PBS took swift action, training a rapid response team with partners BioAWARE and ISAAA to provide accurate and timely information to policy makers and media.

As a result, in September 2011, Kenya's NBA approved requests from the World Food Program for importation and transit to Uganda of maize meal and maize-soya blend with GM content.

### **For more information:**

[www.ifpri.org](http://www.ifpri.org)

[www.pbs.ifpri.info](http://www.pbs.ifpri.info)

David Wafula, Coordinator  
PBS/Kenya

Tel: +254 204 223 626

Email: [d.wafula@cgiar.org](mailto:d.wafula@cgiar.org)

Samson Okumu, Activity Manager  
USAID/Kenya

Agriculture, Business and Environment Office

Tel: +254 208 622 702

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



Photo: USAID/IFPRI

*NEMA officers simulate DNA extraction test*

**Updated February 2012**