

PREPARATIONS IN THE AU SYSTEMS IN HANDLING ENGINEERED PRODUCTS FOR VECTOR CONTROL

Barbara Glover, Moussa Savadogo, Olalekani Akinbo and Aggrey Ambali

NEPAD Science, Technology and Innovation Hub

NEPAD Agency

African Union (AU) Member States are at different stages in the development of regulatory frameworks for modern biotechnology applications, which include genetically modified (GM) crops and transgenic insects. Regulatory systems on GMs in Africa arise from the same premise of international regulations through the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety (CPB).

To advance the science of biotechnology in Africa effectively, while at the same time safeguarding human health and the environment, the African Union adopted a High Level Panel report entitled, ***Freedom to Innovate***, which advocates for a co-evolutionary approach where technology development should go hand in hand with regulation. African Union Member States, through their Ministers of Science and Technology, have committed to develop effective National Biosafety Frameworks (NBFs) and regulatory systems that foster the safe use of biotechnology. The biosafety frameworks comprise biotechnology policies, administrative systems, mechanisms for public engagement, laws and regulations on biosafety. Pursuance to the commitment of Member States, the NEPAD Agency, established the African Biosafety Network of Expertise (ABNE) in 2009 with the mandate to build functional regulatory systems in Africa. Currently, 49 AU Member States have signed and ratified the CPB and 12 countries have established biosafety law/Acts.

There is no separate Act focusing on transgenic pests and other GMs but both are regulated by the National Biosafety Committees (NBCs) of countries involved. The Acts allow for confined field trial experiments of some GM crops and efforts are ongoing to develop containment facilities for transgenic mosquitoes in some member states. The ABNE, as a continent-wide service provider that has political buy-in from Member States, plays an effective coordinating role in terms of capacity building of regulators in decision making process, and facilitating compliance to international best standards towards the safe adoption of the technologies, including GM crops and transgenic insects.