

*Where Nature and Science Meet*

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Vol. 81

December 2005

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**BioLines** is AfricaBio's 'Biotechnology Headlines' – a quick guide to what is topical. By design, the articles are not exhaustive, but references are given to follow up points of interest. Let us know what you like and dislike about **BioLines** and what you want to see as part of this service. Articles are edited and some shortened to meet space requirements. It is not the intention of this service to infringe on copyright. **BioLines** is issued free of charge and every effort is made to acknowledge the source of information.

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## **COTTON IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME FOR WEST AFRICA LAUNCHED**

[http://www.ustr.gov/Document\\_Library/Press\\_Releases/2005/November/US\\_AnnouncesLaunch\\_of\\_West\\_Africa\\_Cotton\\_Improvement\\_Program.html](http://www.ustr.gov/Document_Library/Press_Releases/2005/November/US_AnnouncesLaunch_of_West_Africa_Cotton_Improvement_Program.html)

According to U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Mike Johanns and U.S. Trade Representative Rob Portman, USAID is allocating US\$7 million (with US\$5 million in fresh funding) as part of a new West Africa Cotton Improvement Program (WACIP) aimed at the cotton sectors of Benin, Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, and Senegal.

According to Johanns and Portman, the National Cotton Council (NCC) will be a key WACIP partner, and will provide assistance to Africa during the cotton harvest. For its part, WACIP will focus on reducing soil degradation and expanding the use of good agricultural practices; strengthening private agricultural organizations; establishing a West African regional training program for cotton ginners; improving the quality of C-4 cotton through better classification of seed cotton and lint; improving linkages between U.S. and West African agricultural research organizations involved with cotton; improving the enabling environment for agricultural biotechnology; and policy/institutional reform.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR BIOTECH PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT IN EAST AFRICA**

<http://www.ris.org.in/abdr.html>

Key challenges continue to be faced by small-scale farmers in the access of technology. John Komen and colleagues in "Biotechnology product development partnerships: emerging institutional capacities in East Africa" recommend that East Africa should consider the following concerns for potential future efforts in research, training, and policy advocacy:

- Developing and implementing clear national policies, legal framework, and regulatory guidelines for biotechnology R & D;
- Strengthening of the local private sector;
- Financial incentives to promote private sector investment in R&D programmes;
- Introducing organizational reforms in public organizations to facilitate R& D partnerships; and
- Designing capacity building and awareness programs to stimulate entrepreneurship and business development.

The article, published in the Vol. 7, No. 3 issue of the Asian Biotechnology and Development Review, summarizes a series of studies conducted in East African countries to analyze product development in biotechnology, including public and private sector roles and interactions.

### **SCIENCE ACADEMIES IN AFRICA TO BE STRENGTHENED**

<http://www.nationalacademies.org/nairobi/>

The African Science Academy Development Initiative (ASADI) recently held its first annual conference in Nairobi, Kenya. Entitled "Harnessing Science and Technology Capacity," the conference included public sessions, and brought together 150 African academicians, government officials, and outside experts.

ASADI was established in 2004 to strengthen African academies' ability to inform government policy-making and public discourse with independent, evidence-based advice. The initiative is supported by a \$20 million grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and administered by the U.S. National Academies. It will be carried out in Africa over the next decade, focusing on efforts to improve human health.

The initial focal points for the initiative are the science academies of Nigeria, Uganda, and South Africa. Strategic planning grants will also be given to the science academies of Cameroon, Senegal, Ghana, and Kenya, as well as the regional African Academy of Sciences.

### **NUMBER OF GM LITERATURE TALLIED**

<http://www.nature.com/nbt/journal/v23/n11/full/nbt1105-1348.html>

Philip Vain documents "Published Literature on Plant Transgenic Science: Pace and Geographic Distribution" in the latest issue of Nature Biotechnology. In his article, he tracks the number of plant transgenics related articles collected from the ISI Web of Science and CAB Abstracts published between 1973 and 2003.

Vain found a total of 30,624 articles with 4,545 focusing on the development of plant transgenic technology; 21,843 focusing on the applications of these technologies and 4,236 concerned with the development of GM crops. He also found that the number of published articles on the development of GM crops and the application of plant transgenic technology has increased annually, but not significantly since 1995.

Geographic analysis of the data shows that historically, North America and Western Europe jointly led research on plant transgenic science. In the last ten years, however, Vain found there has been a sustained expansion of scientific literature in North America, a dramatic increase in Asia, and recently, a slow-down in the rest of the world, including Western Europe.

### **MINISTER CALLS FOR HARMONIZED BIOTECH POLICY**

<http://allafrica.com>

Permanent Secretary James Ongwae of the Kenya Ministry of Agriculture said there is the need for a harmonized policy on biotechnology for the eastern and southern African region. He made this remark during the opening ceremonies of the Kenya National Consultative Workshop on Biotechnology and Biosafety. Allan Kisia of the East African Standard quoted Ongwae as saying that countries were in different levels of enacting their biosafety guidelines.

The consultative workshop was organized to understand regional opportunities, challenges, views and positions on genetically modified organisms, and the impact on trade and food security. A regional position will be formalized based on recommendations made.

## NOTICEBOARD

- 16 – 18 January 2006 - APEC DIALOGUE ON AGRI-BIOTECH** - The High Level Policy Dialog in Agricultural Biotechnology (HLPDAB) of APEC will hold a conference/seminar on "Biosafety Policy Options" in Manila, Philippines. This conference, sponsored by Canada, Peru, Philippines, the U.S.A. and Vietnam, will focus on creating a positive investment environment for agricultural biotechnology. Among the topics to be discussed include economies' obligations under the WTO and the Cartagena Protocol, impact of regulation on trade flow in the APEC region, and biosafety regulation and socioeconomic considerations. For further information, email Elzette VanRooyen at vanrooy1@msu.edu.
- 2 – 4 March 2006 - LEADERSHIP COURSE FOR LIFE SCIENCE EXECUTIVES** - The University Basel announces the first Leadership Course called "European Course for Life Sciences Executives", ECLE, to be held in two parts on March 2-4 and 23-25, 2006 at Bad Schauenburg near Basel. The course has been created to provide a focused leadership course for executives in the European Life Sciences Industry. The comprehensive program is available on the EuropaBio website at: [http://www.europabio.org/ECLE\\_Programme.pdf](http://www.europabio.org/ECLE_Programme.pdf). You may also contact Dr. Susanne Daniel at [info@ecle.ch](mailto:info@ecle.ch).
- 6 – 10 March 2006 - ICGEB TO HOLD WORKSHOP** - A workshop entitled "Introduction to biosafety and risk assessment for the environmental release of genetically modified organisms (GMOs): Theoretical approach and scientific background," will take place in Treviso, Italy. The workshop is being organized by the International Center for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology (ICGEB) in collaboration with the Instituto Agronomico per l'Oltremare. The closing date for applications is November 30. More information is available at [http://www.icgeb.org/MEETINGS/CRS06/6\\_10marzo.pdf](http://www.icgeb.org/MEETINGS/CRS06/6_10marzo.pdf)
- 8 – 9 March 2006 - BRAZIL CONFERENCE** - "Biotechnology and Brazil: Implications and Opportunities for Global Agriculture" is scheduled to take place in São Paulo, Brazil. The conference will examine the implications of biotechnology regarding cost of production of soybeans and future GMO crops; the positions and policies that Europe has taken with regard to GMO soybeans, cotton and corn, and consumer concerns surrounding GMO labeling. For more information, visit <http://www.agra-net.com/biotech06>