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Gauteng Premier opens international biotechnology conference in Johannesburg

Gauteng Premier, Nomvula Mokonyane recently opened the 9th Agricultural biotechnology international conference (ABIC 2011) at the Sandton Convention Center in Johannesburg. The Conference was held at the convention center from 6 - 9 September 2011. In her opening remarks she said biotechnology was a transformative technology entrenched in sustainable development to create better living conditions, while contributing to environment conservation.

"There is significant pressure on natural resources to provide energy for other industries, such as the power industry, through renewable energies. Food production has to explore other technological methods to provide sufficient food for the growing population of the province," said Mokonyane.

The conference was attended by world leading biotechnology experts from across the Globe. This was the first time the conference is been held in Africa. The theme for ABIC 2011 was agricultural biotechnology for economic development. This prestigious conference is destined to put the continent on the map as far as biotechnology is concerned.

According to experts, agricultural biotechnology is no longer viewed as just part of the agricultural sector. It is now recognized that agricultural biotechnology can play a significant role in economic development at the community, provincial, national and international levels.



Premier Nomvula Mokonyane

At the conference, industry leaders, investors, policy makers, scientists, researchers and other professionals working in the field of agricultural biotechnology interacted with each other to look at the latest advances, barriers to biotechnology and future scenarios.

The conference has tracks in Bioeconomy; Genomics for Improved Agriculture; Bio-based Industrial Products; Biopharming; and, Environmental and Food Safety Evaluation, the New Frontier.

ABIC2011 was hosted by AfricaBio with support from the Gauteng Department of Agriculture and Rural Development.

Gauteng had another "first" added to its cap

Gauteng had another "first" added to its cap when the world's biotechnology experts converged in Johannesburg for the 2011 Agricultural Biotechnology International Conference.

The conference's theme for this year's conference: "Agricultural Biotechnology for Economic Development", which fit together with the Gauteng Province's focus on economic development and job creation.



From left are: Jerome Konecsni, MEC Mayathula-Khoza, Prof, Jennifer Thomson, Dr Graham Head and Mr Walter Green (AfricaBio).

Speaking at the event, the Gauteng MEC for Agriculture and Rural Development Nandi Mayathula-Khoza said the Gauteng provincial government was committed to exploring the use of biotechnology for food production and job creation and had a strategy in place, which was launched in 2008.

"The strategy includes using crops that are resistant to climate change for farming, public awareness of the use of biotechnology, student participation in public forums, bursary schemes to ensure that skilled people are employed in this sector and stimulating the economy through manufacturing biotechnology products," she explained.

She noted that the Gauteng provincial government was also exploring ways to support seed funding for genetically modified crops for subsistence farmers and to assist them in graduating to medium-scale farming and creating employment. "We also aim to create a platform for partnerships to allow knowledge sharing to further grow the industry," said Mayathula-Khoza.



GHANAIANS URGED TO EMBRACE BIOTECHNOLOGY TO SOLVE FOOD SECURITY PROBLEM

Source: GNA

The use of biotechnology will significantly help to solve food security problem and reduce poverty in the country, Dr. Yaa Difie Osei, Senior Lecturer at the Department of Biochemistry, Cell and Molecular Biology of University of Ghana, Legon, said recently at the first monthly session meeting of Open Forum on Agricultural Biotechnology in Africa (OFAB) on "Biotechnology: Its Principle and Potential Uses in Ghana" in Accra.

The initiative served as a platform for stakeholders to share knowledge and experiences and explore new avenues for un-leashing biotechnology. The meeting was aimed at bringing together stakeholders in biotechnology and facilitates interactions between scientists, journalists, civil societies, law makers and policy makers.

Dr Osei said modern biotechnology complemented traditional technologies in effectively addressing food security problems while increasing farmers' income. According to her, some critical challenges facing farmers including weeds, pests and diseases, spoilage due to over-ripening, inadequate irrigation and lack of mechanization could be addressed through effective application of biotechnology.

Urging Ghanaians to embrace biotechnology, she said, the application of Genetically Modified (GM) technology would not only increase crop yields, but also fight insects to enable farmers to save money for other uses.

Dr Osei explained that biotechnology was like any technological application that used biological systems, living organisms to make or modify products. She said biotechnology was a vital technology which if it's properly harnessed could augur well for the development of this country's agricultural, manufacturing and health sectors.



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NZ TO HOST ABIC 2011

The New Zealand Government is investing \$100,000 to bring international agricultural biotechnology experts to their country next year, Minister of Science and Innovation Wayne Mapp announced recently.

New Zealand was announced as the host for the 2012 Agricultural Biotechnology International Conference at the closing of the 2011 conference in Johannesburg, South Africa.

"This prestigious conference will bring hundreds of international delegates to New Zealand," said Dr Mapp. "It is a chance to showcase New Zealand and Australian biotech capability."

The Ministry of Science and Innovation and AusBiotech, Australia's biotechnology organisation, played key roles in securing the conference for Australasia.

"New Zealand has a growing reputation for the innovative use of science and technology to support our primary industries," said Dr Mapp. "This conference will put the spotlight on what New Zealand and Australia can offer to the international market in areas such as agricultural technology, animal health, food technology and human health."

Agriculture-focused science and technology has, over more than a century, helped make New Zealand agriculture a world-leader and the backbone of our economy. In the last financial year agriculture generated more than \$24.5 billion in exports.

NZBIO, which represents New Zealand's biotechnology industry, will host the conference in Rotorua from 2-6 September 2012.

Consumer Protection Regulation effective October 2011

On 1 April 2011, the South African National Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) published regulations in the Gazette that brought the Consumer Protection Act (68/2008) into enforcement. The regulation came into effect six months after the commencement of the act on 1 October 2011.

According to the act:

- All food containing more than five percent gene-tically modified ingredients, whether produced in South Africa or elsewhere, needs to carry the declaration which states, "contains at least five percent genetically modified organisms in a conspicuous and easily legible manner and size.
- Those products that contain less than five percent of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) may be labeled "Genetically modified content is below five percent".
- If it is impossible or not feasible to test goods for the presence of GMOs, the product must be labeled "may contain GMO ingredients".
- Less than one percent may be labeled as does not contain genetically modified organisms.

(IRM) INSECT RESISTANCE MANAGEMENT TRAINING WORKSHOP

27-28 October 2011

AU-NEPAD Agency African Biosafety Network of Expertise (ABNE), in collaboration with CropLife International (CLI) and AfricaBio will be presenting the IRM Training Workshop at the St Georges' Hotel, Kempton Park, South Africa from 27-28 October 2011. The aim of this training workshop is to bring together African experts in the field around a project that is set to deliver a thoroughly researched, state-ofthe-art, piece of critical information for decision makers, policy makers and extension officers; to provide decision makers with a state of the art assessment of what is needed in order to introduce effective and long-lasting IRM programs; to develop suitable and effective IRM communication tools and to establish a group of African experts that could form a resource for decision makers and a pool of IRM trainers for the continent. Potentially this group could also act as a source of expertise for risk assessment of new GM crops.

3rd Annual African DNA Forensics Conference in Pretoria on 27-28 October 2011

Bode Technology and Inqaba Biotec are hosting the 3rd Annual African DNA Forensics Conference in Pretoria on 27 and 28 October 2011. Please see our website for more information.

Seegene: Launching the Magicplex MTB-MDR kit system for combined and efficient MTB and drug resistance testing (RIF & INH). All you need is a conventional and qPCR instruments.

Thermo Scientific Genomics range includes products from legacies Fermentas, Finnzymes, Abgene, Dharmacon and Open Biosystems. You get these widely used products easily and conveniently from Inqaba biotec!

Are you looking for some well priced, quality gel electrophoresis systems? Please ask us about our Wealtec range of products of small equipment for molecular biology labs.

Zymo Research introduces Direct-zol $^{\text{TM}}$ RNA MiniPrep: Simply add sample in TRI-Reagent $^{\text{RNA}}$ to the spin column and then spin, wash, and elute the RNA, bypassing messy phase separation and precipitation procedures.

For more information go to:

http://www.inqababiotec.co.za/index.php/dna-forensics/3rd-aa-dna-forensics-conference

Biofuels have large-scale potential, but lack regulation guidelines

The President of the South African Biofuel Association Mr. Andrew Makanete in his presentation at the 2011 Agricultural Biotechnology International Conference in Johannesburg recently said South Africa had all the necessary technology and resources to develop its biofuel and Bioeconomy industry into a world class sector but this was hindered by a lack of regulations and government policy.

SA's 2007 biofuel industrial strategy is aimed at biofuels accounting for 2% of final liquid fuels consumption by 2013 - about 400-million litres. But there is still no cohesive structure or policy to coordinate this effort.

"We could increase the capacity of grains by over 3-million tons and create a biofuel market for that. This would create 75000 direct jobs and 20000 indirect jobs and could save the country almost \$2bn in forex," said Mr Makenete, in his presentation.

The potential for bioenergy in SA was greater than anywhere else in the world, Mr. Makenete said. "The key is to create the market and decrease the cost of doing business." The government needed to guarantee the market, and ensure standardization and quality control, he said.

The technologies to do this is available locally: "It is easy to access and the more economies of scale you have, the more efficient it becomes. It's about getting the logistical framework in place, he concluded."

Facts and figures

GMO permits issued in South Africa in 2010/2011

	2010	2011 (August)
Exports	225	141
Imports	128	74
Trails	33	26
Contained use	6	3
Commodity use	2	0
General release	4	0
Total	398	244

AFRICABIO'S NEW OFFICE

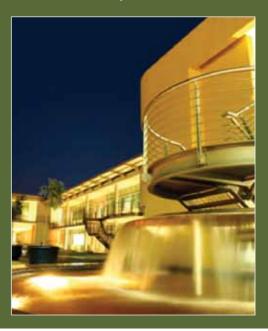
AfricaBio has recently moved to its new offices at the **Innovation Hub** in Pretoria, South Africa. This is part of the organization ongoing restructuring to make the organization more effective and better strategically aligned with like minded organizations in and around South Africa.

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