

PRESS RELEASE

BIOTECHNOLOGY GAINING MOMENTUM IN AFRICA

The acceptance of biotechnology is gaining momentum in Africa as more and more countries realise the potential it offers for sustainable food production *as another tool to help* eradicate famine and poverty, says Prof. Jocelyn Webster, executive director of AfricaBio.

Speaking in Pretoria at a Southern Africa Biotechnology Communications Training Workshop, she said it is hoped that by the end of 2005 most countries in Africa would have draft biosafety frameworks in place.

The workshop was organised by AfricaBio to train delegates regarding the need for biotech communication to inform the public in Southern African countries about biotechnology. More than 70 delegates from 10 of the 14 Southern African Development Community countries (SADC) attended. Representatives from Kenya, Cote d'Ivoire, Tanzania and the United States also attended.

She pointed out that 30 African countries, including six SADC members, had already signed the Cartagena Biosafety Protocol (CBP).

"AfricaBio will continue to assist African governments, tertiary institutions, the biotech industry and public research institutions involved in living modified organisms (LMOs), to deal with the implications of the Cartagena Biosafety Protocol," Prof Dr Webster said. "We will help train more people to become available to public sector institutions for this purpose."

Several delegates indicated that they are requesting their governments to put the necessary legal frameworks in place. They also asked the South African authorities to assist with these procedures.

A consumer survey conducted under the auspices of the University of Pretoria in January 2004 indicated that 58% of consumers in Gauteng and 56% in Cape Town considered GM food to be as safe as conventional foods. The survey also found that respondents had confidence in government regulatory control measures.

END

16/08/0

For More Information

Contact

AfricaBio

Tel : (012) 667-2689

Fax : (012) 667-1920

africabio@mweb.co.za