

OVERVIEW OF BIOTECHNOLOGY IN ANGOLA

Angola's decision makers are aware of the need to increase agricultural production to alleviate hunger and poverty and can see the role that biotechnology could play in assisting with this objective, therefore Angola is willing to be involved in global technology development and processes. However, at the same time, in December 2004 the Government of Angola, through the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, issued the Decree No. 92/04 that prohibits the importation of seeds and grains genetically modified. Under the framework of this Decree genetically modified grains are allowed for the human consumption only after being milled. Therefore, while recognising biotechnology as valuable, Angola remains very cautious about it.

Angola has only recently emerged from 27 years of civil war, therefore very little research and development is currently being conducted in Angola. Initiatives to address this include: a molecular lab has been established in Luanda, mainly for the identification of indigenous germplasm in Angola; the Angolan Agriculture Research Institute is concentrating on the development of root and tuber crops, molecular classification and tissue culture; the Faculty of Agronomy at the University of Angola is involved with biotechnology research. Angola's main stumbling-block is lack of human resource and equipment capacity; therefore efforts are now directed towards training scientists and regulators and equipping laboratories and institutes. To do this, delegations of Angolan decision makers and technicians have been sent abroad to countries such as Brazil, Canada and South Africa to develop their expertise in the areas of biotechnology and biosafety

Angola is involved with the UNEP-GEF project, and is in the process of formulating a biosafety framework and developing legislations. In February 2006 a National Forum was organised in Luanda for the validation of the National Biodiversity and Strategic Action Plan (NBSAP).

Angola ratified the Convention on Biological Diversity in April 1998. The Cartagena Biosafety Protocol was ratified by Parliament in 2002, but it has not yet been deposited with the respective Secretariat.

The main challenges and opportunities for Angola in the next few years will be:

- Developing a biosafety legislation
- Setting up a biosafety committee
- Building capacity in the biotechnology sector.