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**AFRICABIO' MEMBERS NEWSLETTER**  
**April-June 2015: 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition**  
**-THE INSIDER-**

*Note from the CEO*

Dear Members,

This quarter we have been occupied with addressing various emergent issues including the recent classifications of crop protection products by the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC). The classification of glyphosate as a “probable” carcinogen, indicates a potential hazard rather than a risk to humans, and has been overly misinterpreted by the media, analysts, and especially, the anti-GMO lobby groups.

We have developed and shared fact-sheets with the regulators at the Departments of Agriculture and Health (DAFF and DoH), written rebuttals to newspapers, engaged in radio and social media platforms to address public concerns. We’ll continue to facilitate platforms for members and stakeholders to engage in an open and transparent dialogue, as there’s a need to build confidence about the role of biotech crops in improving farmer livelihoods, protecting the environment, and enabling food security.

We are working closely with our regulators to address emerging regulatory issues in the country, and we are pleased with the level of confidence government departments have on the organization’s efforts. A bilateral meeting was held with the Dept. Environmental Affairs’, to discuss Biosafety Priority Areas for 2015 and related matters (2nd Draft of the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP); DEA-SANBI National Stakeholder Workshop on Post-Market Monitoring of GMO’s; the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety Third National Report due etc.). We also met with the EU delegation in South Africa to discuss the European Commission’ new proposal of allowing member states to prohibit the use of GM products in their territories.

I would like to thank you for renewing your 2015 membership & for your continued support! Below is a summary of activities we have undertaken in the last quarter.

*Nompumelelo Obokoh*

*Please take the opportunity to use the promotion space we have reserved for you our valued members on our newsletters, social media, & website. This space gives you the opportunity to place any important announcement, notices & information. Send the information to [info@africabio.com](mailto:info@africabio.com)*



## 1. Public Hearings on Plant Improvement bill and Plant Breeders right bill

In May, the South Africa's Portfolio Committee on Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries held public hearings on two bills—the Plant Improvement Bill and the Plant Breeders' Rights Bill. The Plant Breeders' Rights Amendment Bill is aimed at strengthening the protection of intellectual property rights relevant to new varieties of plants, contributing to economic growth and positively impacting South Africa's competitiveness in the agricultural sector. Key amendments include extending protection to all plant genera and species; addressing matters of infringement of plant breeders' rights through the appropriate fines and penalties, defining the limits and the beneficiaries in the application of farmer's privilege; and empowering the Minister to establish a Plant Breeders' Rights Advisory Committee to advise the Registrar on matters related to plant variety protection.

The Plant improvement bill aims to regulate the quality of plants and propagation material intended for cultivation and sale by means of registration of types of businesses and premises involved. Some of the new amendments include aligning the scope and provisions of the Plant Improvement Act to the Constitution and other related legislation in the agricultural sector. In addition, the Bill includes provisions regulating the quality of plants and seed. These amendments are significant in that the importance of quality plant propagating material to support sustainable production as well as participation in the global market by setting quality standards for plants and seeds is recognized.

As expected, the activists are vehemently opposed to both bills claiming that the proposed laws regulating seeds in South Africa will entrench hunger and inequality. AfricaBio is closely monitoring the development of the bill and is working with industry members on a proactive strategy to address anti-GM campaigns.

## 2. The Glyphosate classification storm

Pursuant, to the press statement issued by the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC), on the classification of glyphosate as a category 2a carcinogen, which suggest that it could “probably” carcinogenic to humans. On 19 May 2015, the Times newspaper jumped on the bandwagon and published an article titled “Toxins in your bread” on the front page. In the interest of accurate and truthful reporting, AfricaBio, has already written a rebuttal and submitted to the Times editor for consideration. We also posted accurate information on glyphosate on our website and media platforms. AfricaBio, is closely monitoring the developments of the anti-glyphosate Campaign.

### For further reading:

<http://www.up.ac.za/media/shared/108/2015%20Working%20papers/Value-of-glyphosate-in-sa-agriculture-Mgouse.zp56221.pdf>

<http://www.glyphosate.eu/there-any-evidence-glyphosate-causes-cancer>

<https://www.scribd.com/doc/265961563/Monsanto-Press-Release>

<http://www.africabio.com/index.php/news/bio-safety/555-no-toxins-in-your-bread>



### 3. AfricaBio facilitates a study tour for Kenyan delegation

AfricaBio, in collaboration with the AATF and ISAAA, co-organized a ‘seeing-is-believing’ tour for Kenyan farmers, regulators, journalists, cereal milling associations, and seed traders to visit small holder farmers planting biotech crops, the study tour took place from 19 to 23 April 2015 in South Africa. The objective of the study tour was to create a platform for information sharing between the Kenyans and their South African counterparts. The delegation had an opportunity to gain first-hand information about the regulation and cultivation of biotech crops in South Africa. The study tour included presentations and discussions with South African regulators, technology developers, biotech and biosafety experts as well as field visits to GM fields. Participants had the opportunity to visit farms cultivating biotech maize, soya and cotton. South Africa has the longest history of planting biotech crops in Africa and is the leading country cultivating biotech crops on the continent. It is envisaged that the study will help Kenya to learn from the South African experience and develop champions of the technology once the Kenyan ban is lifted.



*A group photo of the delegates with a female small scale farmer (wearing blue working suit in the middle of the picture) who plants GM maize, Bronkhorstspuit, Pretoria.*

#### Some of the Speakers that addressed the Kenyan delegation at a workshop



*Ms Thandeka Mbassa (GDARD-HOD)*



*Mr Daniel Otunge (AATF-OFAB)*





*Dr Maneshree Jugmohan-Naidu (DST)*



*Mrs Ntakadzeni Tshidada (DEA)*

#### 4. fricaBio in full force at the 2015 Rand Easter Show

The Rand Easter Show is one of the largest consumer exhibitions held annually in Johannesburg, South Africa. The 2015 Show took place from 3 to 12 April and science and technology was featured for the first time. AfricaBio took advantage of the huge crowds that attended the Show to share information about the role of biotech crops in the South African economy. More than 400 people visited AfricaBio's exhibition stand and they included students, farmers, and curious and concerned citizens.

The majority of those who visited the stand did not know much about biotech crops. They had quite varied perceptions about biotech crops that ranged from positive to negative. The AfricaBio staff shared accurate information on biotech crops and biotechnology.



*Lesley Mabasa, Project Assistant at AfricaBio shares information on Plant Biotechnology at AfricaBio' exhibition booth.*



## 5. South African Delegation Engaged at BIO 2015

This June, a delegation over 30 representatives from the South African Department of Science & Technology, the Department of Trade and Industry, the Medical Research Institute, the Industrial Development Cooperation, and biotech and pharmaceutical companies attended the BIO 2015 International Convention in Philadelphia, U.S.A. The delegation met with biotech industry leaders, as well as the International Council of Biotech Associations (ICBA) and discussed the opportunities and challenges for biotechnology in South Africa; increasing investments into the biotech industry in South Africa; regulatory challenges for plant and medical biotechnology; and the draft national intellectual property policy under review in South Africa.



*In the picture: South African delegates and AfricaBio staff attend the BIO 2015 International Convention with BIO's Jim Greenwood (first row, second from left).*



## 6. AfricaBio participates in the Agri-Biotech and Biosafety Communication, Alliance for Science Training and OFAB Planning meeting in Nairobi, Kenya

AfricaBio' Project Manager, Dr Bongani Maseko, participated at the Agri-Biotech and Biosafety Communication Conference, Alliance for Science Training and OFAB Planning meetings held in Nairobi, Kenya. These meetings were held from 9 to 18 April 2015 and were co-hosted by the ISAAA AfricaCentre, AATF and the Alliance for Science. The Alliance for Science facilitated training on grassroots communication and campaign on 10 and 11 April 2015. The Agri-Biotech and Biosafety Communication Conference was attended by delegates from over 30 countries from around the world. The conference brought together all major organizations and networks involved in biotech and biosafety communication to share best practices and experiences. Delegates adopted a declaration calling on the Kenyan Government to lift a 2-year moratorium on GMO imports. AfricaBio, shared information on the association's communication initiatives in South African and also facilitated the OFAB annual planning meetings held on 15 and 16 April 2015.



*Participants pose with Kenyan Parliamentarians Hon. Florence Mutua, Hon. W. Otichille, and Dr. Wilson Songs, Principal Secretary and Ministry of Industrialization and Enterprise Development.*



## 7. Commercialization of Indigenous Knowledge and the Bio-economy Breakfast

In February, AfricaBio in collaboration with The Innovation HUB co-hosted an Indigenous Knowledge Technologies business breakfast. This was based on the premise of growing interest in IK-based products as alternative medicine and food source. The objective of this forum was to share ideas on how IK-based products could be commercialized into acceptable biomedical and market ready products and services. The breakfast brought together various stakeholders including entrepreneurs and academics. Dr S Shava from the Science & Technology Education at UNISA set the scene by giving an overview of the IKS, how the sector has evolved and challenges facing the sector. The event gave emerging bio-entrepreneurs an opportunity to share their successes and challenges. The forum concluded that special dispensation should be extended to IK-based entrepreneurs because the current intellectual property instruments do not support practices in IK. Such assistance would include access to funding, business development services, standards and certification.



*Top left: Dr Nompumelelo Obokoh (AfricaBio), top right: Dr. Chamunorwa Togo (The Innovation Hub);  
Bottom: participants at the IKS breakfast*

