ISAAA
INTERNATIONAL SERVICE
FOR THE ACQUISITION
OF AGRI-BIOTECH
APPLICATIONS

Finishing Strong: Going the Distance for African Farmers

At the AfriCenter, we believe that our work would be incomplete without delivering the benefits of modern biotechnology tools to small-holder African farmers. In 2018, we continued to channel our efforts towards this end.

KNOWLEDGE SHARING

We launched the ISAAA Annual report on Global Status of Commercialised Biotech/GM crops (Brief 53) in six African countries.

The launches garnered

5 MILLION+
MEDIA IMPRESSIONS

Repacked into knowledge products such as top ten facts on agri-biotech in Africa and infographics

17TH JAN 2018   ISSUE NO.1

THE DRUMBEAT
AFRICA BIOSCIENCE TRENDS

INTRODUCTION
This issue takes us back to Nigeria as we celebrate a major breakthrough for the region – commercial approval of a GM food crop, Bt cowpea! Africa has finally contributed one crop to the global biotech basket. We speak to Prof. Mohammad Ishiyaku, Principal Investigator of the Bt Cowpea project. In an exclusive interview under our Story of the Month section, Prof. Ishiyaku reflects on the product development process and shares some words of advice for other researchers conducting similar

The role of scientist
In our Opinion, Dr. Manuela Campa from Stellenbosch University, South Africa, urges scientists to participate in shaping global policies and decisions and to step up in biotechnology agreements. She draws her thoughts from the recently concluded United Nations Biodiversity Conference in Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt.

OPINION
Dr. James
READ MORE

REGULATOR'S CORNER
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AfriCenter launched a monthly e-newsletter dubbed

THE DRUMBEAT

LAUNCHED IN FEBRUARY 2018

11 ISSUES

3,000+
active subscribers so far...

SEEING-IS-BELIEVING STUDY TOURS

500+
STAKEHOLDERS

exposed to agri-biotech and biosafety advancements, both locally and globally, through our pioneer seeing-is-believing study tours

NOTABLY

30

Kenyan delegates comprising of policy and decision makers, farmers, regulators and members of the Bt cotton taskforce participated in 2018 edition of the India study tour. The activity positively contributed towards the Bt cotton adoption process in Kenya.

MARGINALISED VOICES IN BIOTECH

To amplify farmers and women voices in the agri-biotech and biosafety discourse, AfriCenter facilitated the launch of

2 KEY NETWORKS

African Women for Biosciences (AWfB).

Society for Biotech Farmers of Kenya (SOBIFAK)

EMPOWERING MESSANGERS

In our continued quest to build the capacity of those who play a role in shaping public opinion on agricultural technology, we held close to

10 SCIENCE COMMUNICATION TRAINING WORKSHOPS

200+ PARTICIPANTS

15+ COUNTRIES

Further,, the Center played a key role in preparing African delegates for the 2018 UN Biodiversity Convention COP-MOP9 that took place in Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt. The preparatory meetings provided an opportunity to raise awareness and harmonize the region's perspectives on priority agenda items and identified opportunities for effective participation in the international biosafety negotiations

MEDIA ENGAGEMENT

We exposed media practitioners to advancements in the agri-biotech and biosafety landscape through seeing-is-believing study tours and Science BioCafés.

BIOTECH MEDIA AWARD

2ND

Open Forum on Agricultural Biotechnology (OFAB) Kenya Media Awards held

Participating journalists increased by

100%+

These efforts have led to over

05 MILLION

media impressions

ENGAGING POLICY MAKERS

AfriCenter continued to engage policy makers and key decision makers. We ensured that they remained alive to local and global progress on agri-biotech and biosafety. In Kenya, we worked towards aligning agri-biotech with the government's Big Four agenda. As a result, the Center increased engagements between government officials and agricultural experts in order to create synergy between key players in the development and deployment of biotech crops.

CHALLENGES

- The ban imposed on importation of GM products into Kenya is yet to be lifted. A court case filed by the Kenya Small Scale Farmers Forum (KSSFF) barring the lifting of the ban is making little progress, slowing the finalization process.

- The Uganda Biotechnology and Biosafety Bill referred back to Parliament for reviews and amendments is yet to be brought before the floor of the House. This means the Bill will take long before it is assented to Law.

- Europe's negative position on New Breeding Tools (NBTs) could influence how Africa regulates the technology given the continent borrowed heavily from EU's precautionary approach with GMOs. Consequently, there is need to engage African regulators and expose them to how different countries are regulating the technology.

- Continued efforts by activists against adoption and use of GM products in Africa are hampering speedy adoption of GM crops in the continent. However, increased sensitization and awareness creation on GM crops is rendering this activism ineffective.

OPPORTUNITIES

- In April 2018, Swaziland granted two landmark approvals for importation of Bt cotton seed and environmental release of the crop.

- In July 2018, Nigeria approved the commercial release of Bt cotton, MRC 7377BGII and MRC7361BGII, to farmers.

- The Government of Ethiopia, in May 2018, authorized cultivation of biotech crops by approving environmental release of Bt cotton and research trials on biotech maize.

- Kenya commenced Bt cotton planting under National Performance Trials (NPTs) to identify suitable varieties for different agro-ecological zones. This came after the National Environmental Management Authority (NEMA) granted an Environmental Impact Assessment license to Kenya Agricultural Livestock and Fisheries Organization (KALRO) to undertake the trials.

- A recent pronouncement by the Kenyan President, supporting planting of Bt cotton is sending positive signals on the country's readiness to adopt the technology. As well, the President spelt out his development action plan dubbed Big Four Plan Action in which food security and manufacturing are identified as key. The government commits to encourage and facilitate large-scale commercial agriculture to diversify the country's staples through irrigation and other technologies. This creates a window for engagement with policy makers for an enabling environment for GM crops adoption.

- Kenya's National Biosafety Authority (NBA) received three applications from project's intending to use new breeding tools. This is likely to spark conversation on how NBTs should be regulated, and calls for prompt engagements with relevant stakeholders, to avoid miscommunication that could result in the technology's rejection.

- South Africa and Sudan continued to lead the continent with adoption of biotech crops, and remain Africa's greatest examples of the technology's potential.

- Confined field trials for various crops in different countries-Nigeria, Ghana, Tanzania Mozambique, Uganda, Kenya, Malawi is on-going and are expected to proceed to commercialization in the near future. Including field trials of high-yielding and pest-resistant sunflower varieties in Tanzania showed promising results.

GET IN TOUCH: