

A Word from the Chair of ABSF Board

The role of modern biotechnology in Africa's socio-economic development is clear. However, its reality has been caught up in a maelstrom of controversy that has created a global war of rhetoric that is responsible for the poor policy decisions we witness today. The last quarter of the year 2012 was not short of challenges for the biotech fraternity with rogue pseudo-scientists and other enemies of science erecting malicious scaremongering on the way of credible science. We witnessed how these unscrupulous claims can easily reverse years of biotech outreach and awareness efforts. We must never let this happen again. In order to avoid reoccurrence, stakeholders need to stop fire fighting and work together towards finding the root cause of such issues. The need to have concerted efforts when addressing the cross-cutting challenges related to policy engagement, awareness and outreach cannot be emphasised enough. We must combine our voices and come out as stakeholders of biotechnology with one voice.

As we embark on intensive advocacy efforts to try and overcome some of the challenges that befell us towards the close of 2012, ABSF commends all its members for the continued support, especially during the endeavour to reform and improve its mandate so as to meet the challenges presented by the volatile biotechnology environment. We are grateful for your unflinching dedication and commitment. ABSF fully understands and appreciates the key role it plays towards policy advocacy and is looking forward to bringing all stakeholders together in the coming year, and providing a platform where we can all interact and come up with the much needed united front to articulate our policy concerns.



Dr. FRANCIS NANG'AYO
Chairman ABSF Board

The GM Food Label Feud Kenya's Story and Progress So Far



ABSf members reviewing the newly published regulations at a breakfast meeting

Labelling of GM foods in Kenya is a contentious issue. However, this problem is not only unique to Kenya. Questions on whether labelling laws are good national public policy remain unanswered in many parts of the world. The central argument in favour of labelling GM foods is that it is important for consumers to have a choice in consuming or avoiding products made with GM ingredients. A primary argument against labelling is that there are no proven health risks surrounding GM foods, while labels seem to imply such hazards Kenya operationalized its labelling policy on the 25th May 2012.

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The Foundation

The African Biotechnology Stakeholders Forum (ABSF) is a member based organization founded in the year 2000 by a group of top Kenyan Scientists. This was at time when the country and the region as a whole was in need for mechanisms of enhancing awareness as well as instituting an appropriate regulatory environment necessary for the development of biotechnology.

ABSF therefore aims to create an enabling environment in which Africa can participate and benefit from biotechnology in a responsible and sustainable manner. The organization, through its advocacy and dissemination of accurate and balanced information creates a forum through which diverse biotechnology stakeholders can articulate their aspirations, concerns and experiences needed for mutually beneficial and sustainable utilization of biotechnology. Given the diversity in its membership, ABSF is recognized by both Government and Non Governmental organizations as the umbrella organization representing all biotechnology stakeholders.

Our Driving Force

Biotechnology is a key Asset for Africa in the new millennium. Agricultural, medical and environmental biotechnology offers Africa formidable tools to address food insecurity, disease, environmental pollution and poverty.

Who We Are

The African Biotechnology Stakeholders Forum (ABSF) is a not-for-profit, non-political and non-sectarian association providing a platform for sharing, debating and understanding all issues pertaining to biotechnology in agriculture, health, industry and environment.

ABSF represents all stakeholders in biotechnology in Africa currently with over 1300 individual members in 31 African countries, including small and medium sized enterprises involved in research, development, testing and commercialization of biotechnology applications as well as national biotechnology forums in 18 African countries.

Through its membership, ABSF is the window and voice of millions of biotechnology stakeholders in Africa representing farmers, scientists, consumers, manufacturers, politicians and government bodies.

Overall Objectives

- i) To provide a forum for sharing and exchanging experiences and practices in biotechnology with a view of strengthening its application for increased food security, health improvement, poverty alleviation, industrialization and environmental conservation in Africa;
- ii) To provide a Policy Dialogue and Public Interface forum on emerging issues in biotechnology in Africa. Key amongst this is biotechnology policy, legal and regulatory frameworks development for countries in Africa;
- iii) To improve public understanding of biotechnology through provision of accurate information to consumers, media and policy makers to ensure that biotechnology is accurately represented at all levels of society;
- iv) To explore innovation and appropriate biotechnology applications and facilitate their adoption for sustainable development and poverty alleviation in Africa;
- v) To create capacity for information generation, dissemination on appropriate application of biotechnology;
- vi) To facilitate research, development, education, capacity building and training on biotechnology as well as policy and infrastructure development for meeting Africa's needs in biotechnology.

The move by government to gazette this law was welcomed by biotech stakeholders. However, there was fury about some of the content within this regulation. On one hand, scientists felt disregarded and argued that the document lacked a sound scientific basis that would enable the country to reap from the benefits of the technology. According to them and a number of biotech stakeholders, the policy as it were carried far reaching implications that could negatively impact trade and food costs, as well as undermine the economic benefits promised by the GM revolution. On the other hand, anti-GM lobby groups were unhappy about some exemptions dictated by the policy. They argued that all foods containing GM - whether refined or not -should carry GM food labels in order for the policy to fully meet its objective which is partly hinged on enabling consumers to make informed choices.

Evidently, satisfying both the proponents and opponents of biotechnology on this matter is impossible. Above all, sound science should not be side tracked by ethical, cultural and consumer choice issues which are weighty and highly contentious by themselves.

Averting the Storm

Before a consensus was reached on the final regulations, Kenyan scientists under the auspices of ABSF met to discuss the progress of the expected policy, and mull over the likely issues that would crop up. The outcome of the breakfast meeting was a position statement addressed to the Ministry of Higher Education Science and Technology (MoHEST), through the National Biosafety Authority (NBA), articulating various concerns and requesting for further stakeholders consultation before gazettelement. Some of the prominent areas of concern that stakeholders conveyed to MoHEST and NBA for further consideration were on:

- a. the threshold level for adventitious presence of approved biotech events, and the impact that level would have on locally developed GM produce currently under advanced research in our public institutions; access to emergency food aid; and trade. To avoid future obstacles, stakeholders suggested that we adopt a 5% level threshold that is in line with the COMESA harmonised draft.
- b. the provision on traceability which stakeholders felt should not be included since the preamble of the regulations states that safety of food/feed should precede labelling. According to stakeholders, tracing safe food in the supply chain given our rural based production and distribution channels would be an unnecessary, complex and costly process resulting in significant increases in food prices.
- c. the mandatory vs. voluntary labelling regimes - the widespread sentiment was that we should adopt a labelling regime that is consistent with the reality and context of the Kenyan food production, handling and marketing practices as opposed to the super-market style that is mainly applicable in affluent societies. In light of this, stakeholders proposed a flexible voluntary labelling regime.

Biotechnology stakeholders desired a biosafety labelling regulation that would safely regulate and facilitate rather than impede research, development and commercialisation of genetically modified organ-

isms for improved food security and socio-economic development. Consequently, they hoped that their concerns and sentiments would be taken into account before the final regulations were gazetted and adopted. They weren't. Sadly, the prohibitive issues in the published regulations were found to be quite similar to ones identified and raised in the position statement sent to the NBA before gazettelement.

Advocating for Change

Given its mandate as the umbrella organisation representing all biotechnology stakeholders in the country, ABSF brought all stakeholders together to draw a road map on how to start engaging relevant agencies towards revision of the labelling regulation. To begin with, ABSF created an opportunity for its members to meet and review the regulations, identify restrictive clauses, and suggest amendments.

In addition to what stakeholders had raised in the position statement, the following issues of concern were also identified:

- *Labelling is costly and needs to be carefully considered before it is implemented. It will hurt the poor people of the society.*
- *According to the regulations, labelling requires safety assessments to be done. If safety assessment is conducted why demand for labelling? Members felt that the regulations portray or perceive labelling to be safety of the product. The two are different.*
- *Labelling for local informal markets is not practical. Grains are often mixed and it is extremely difficult to monitor.*
- *Labelling of residue feeds is not practical.*
- *Serious risk assessment on imported GMOs is not necessary. Members felt that assessments at the origin should suffice.*
- *Stakeholders worried that the penalties of 20 million shillings, ten years imprisonment or both were quite high. The general sentiment was that to evade the risk of such penalties, operators will simply not handle GMOs, which in practice is similar to saying "No GMOs in Kenya"*

The next step for ABSF was to engage a consultant to conduct research, and provide in-depth data on the scale and depth of impact on the restrictive clauses in the regulations to the Kenyan economy. The report that will soon be reviewed by stakeholders will equip our members with facts and figures which will be very instrumental in coming up with a compelling policy position paper.

In order to amend the labelling regulations, ABSF is pursuing a multi-pronged strategy that will include engaging relevant ministries through various channels, identifying suitable champions, as well as working with the media to educate the public and policy makers on this matter.

This current regulation will not only deny Kenyans the benefits of biotechnology but will also water down the massive investments already made in terms of research and establishment of institutional/regulatory infrastructure in the country. ABSF is therefore keen to see them amended so as to give Kenyans the opportunity to benefit from biotechnology.

Battling to Lift the GM Food Ban



Members of ABSF discussing the ban at a breakfast meeting

On the 8th of November 2012, Kenyans woke up to news that its government through the Ministry of Public Health and Sanitations has banded the importation of GM foods into the country. The decision - which came at a time when a scrupulous study linking GM Maize to cancer was circulating in the media - surprised most stakeholders in and outside the government. According to the statement given by Honourable Beth Mugo, the cabinet cited lack of sufficient evidence regarding the safety of GM foods as the reason behind the ban. A task force led by KEMRI was later set up to conduct a study on the safety of GM foods and advise the government.

ABSF convened a meeting with stakeholders on the 20th November to discuss the ban and seek more clarity and details on circumstances surrounding this issue and its scope. A second breakfast meeting was held on the 27th November to consolidate an appropriate and harmonized position and strategy for stakeholder engagement in pursuit of lifting the ban. ABSF also attended a third meeting held by the National Council for Science and technology (NCST) under BioAware which also addressed the same agenda as the other two but convened by a government department. Out of these meetings, a number of action points have been generated which we are currently implementing. Some of the actions being taken are:

Letters to the government

It was agreed that ABSF writes two letters; one to the Minister of Higher Education Science and Technology appealing for a reversal of the decision, and the other to the Secretary to the

Cabinet seeking to establish the basis of the decision and the composition of the team mandated by cabinet to conduct the study on the safety of GM foods, as well as their terms of reference, their research objectives, methodology to be adopted and the expected duration of the study. ABSF has since dispatched the two letters and are waiting their response.



Dr. Roy Mugira advises the communication teams tasked with drafting the letters to government.

Legal Advice

As part of the strategy ABSF hosted about six key biotech stakeholders on the 6th December 2012 to seek for legal interpretation and advice on the ban.

Mainstreaming Stakeholders' Voice in the Taskforce

An inter-ministerial taskforce was constituted by National Council for Science and Technology through which biotech stakeholders may channel their inputs. Stakeholders (NCST, KEPHIS, ABSF,

Battling to Lift the GM Food Ban

AATF, ISAAA, A-Harvest and USDA) are also working on a document which they intend to share with the taskforce led by KEMRI.

Media Outreach

ABSF produced a newspaper article that discredited Seralini's study and confirmed the safety of GM foods. Kennedy Oyugi – ABSF's Senior Programmes Officer – was on Kenya Broadcasting Cooperation (KBC) morning show where he discussed the safety and benefits of GMOs as well as the implications of the ban.

ABSF XXXX
African BioScience Foundation

DAILY NATION, MONDAY, DEC 24, 2012

GM is Safe; Seralini is a Hoax

The recent cabinet decision to ban GM food imports in Kenya is unfortunate. However, what is worse is the basis of that decision. Sadly, the directive to ban trade and importation of GM foods was informed by a flawed and controversial study that recently generated worldwide headlines.

On 19 September 2012, a French Professor - Gilles-Eric Seralini - released a report linking the development of cancerous tumours in rats to consumption of GM glyphosate-tolerant NK603 maize.

Following the report, a multitude of renowned scientists worldwide and a number of credible scientific bodies have reviewed the study and are uniformly criticizing its objectives, flawed methodology and weak research design. Some of the organisations that have discredited

According to the conclusions of separate and independent assessments carried out by EFSA and six European Union Member States namely; France, Germany, Denmark, Italy, Netherlands and Belgium, "serious defects in the design and methodology of a paper by Seralini et al. mean it does not meet acceptable scientific standards and there is no need to re-examine previous safety evaluations of genetically modified maize NK603"

The French academies conclusively rejected the study as a "scientific non-event" and voiced their concerns on the images circulating in the media. According to the six academies, these images "contributed to fuel totally irrational fears since the results presented are not valid science."

The criticisms come as no surprise bearing in mind the pool of reliable, scientifically sound information confirming the benefits and safety of GM crops, as well as the history of safe use for almost two decades. GMOs have been commercialized for food, feed and planting for the last 16 years with no adverse effects on human and animal health and the environment. A total of 16.7 million farmers in 29 countries worldwide have adopted and are benefitting from GM crops. Numerous International Organisations have also endorsed the health and environmental safety of biotech crops including:

1. The World Health Organisation
2. The Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations
3. The Royal Society (UK)
4. The British Medical Association
5. The National Academy of Sciences (USA)
6. The American Medical Association
7. The European Commission
8. The French Academy of Sciences and Medicines

Kenyans have nothing to fear. The government has put in place structures to ensure the safe handling and use of GMOs. There is the Biotechnology policy of 2006, Biosafety Act of 2009, Biosafety regulations and a functional internationally recognized National Biosafety Authority (NBA) structured according to the Cartagena Protocol on Biodiversity and mandated to advise the government on appropriate handling of GM foods to the advantage of Kenyans.

Any fear or decision based on the Seralini study that has been found to be flawed even by scientists in his own country would therefore be a big embarrassment to Kenya, our regulatory agencies, research institutions and our scientists who have always commanded international repute.

Generically Modified Maize

The results of this study include:

1. The European Food Safety Authority
2. The Belgian Biosafety Advisory Council
3. Danish Technical University
4. French Agency for Food, Environment and Occupational Health and Safety
5. High Council for Biotechnology, France
6. Germany's Federal Institute for Risk Assessment
7. Italy's National Institute of Health Assessment
8. Netherlands Food and Consumer Product Safety Authority
9. Food Standards Australia and New Zealand
10. Six French Academies among them the National Academy of Agriculture, Medicine, Pharmacy, Science, Technology and Veterinary Studies.

ABSF Holds its Annual General Meeting



Participants at the AGM

ABSF Holds its Annual General Meeting

ABSF held its Annual General Meeting (AGM) on the 13th December 2012 in its lower board room at the ABSF secretariat. Attended by over 30 participants representing 13 different institutions, the AGM was key in bringing members up to par with the reforms that were currently taking place within the organisation.

After presentations of the activity report by the secretariat, members were given the opportunity to give their comments on the strengths and weaknesses of the organisation, and suggestions on what ABSF could do to strengthen its mandate and adequately respond to the sporadic biotech environment in Kenya and Africa at large.

What came out strongly was the need to support and strengthen ABSF especially since it was the only member based organisation that the government recognised when it comes to biotechnology related issues. According to members, ABSF is the ideal platform for Kenyans to voice out concerns on policy related issues. Members also advised that ABSF should broaden its stakeholder base to experts in medical and animal biotechnology as a key long term strategy. Following a number of other deliberations that included reviving and strengthening Agricultural Biotechnology

Network in Africa (ABNETA), reviewing and approving the revised constitution, three operational manuals as well as ABSF's five year strategic plan, elections were conducted by Dr. Roy Mugiira (MoHEST) and Mr. Murenga Mwimali (CIMMYT) who forfeited their right to vote. Seven board members were proposed namely: Dr. Charles Waturu, Dr. Francis Nangayo, Dr. Christopher Ngichabe, Dr. Edwadina Otiemo, Dr. Stella Makokha, Dr. Samson Wasao, and Dr. Stephen Mugo.

The following were elected into office:

Chairman:	Dr. Francis Nangayo
Vice chairman:	Dr. Edwardina
Secretary:	Dr. Stella Makokha
Vice Secretary:	Dr. Waturu
Treasurer:	Dr. Stephen Mugo

The outgoing chairman Mr. Joseph Wekundah handed the programme to Dr. Edwardina who gave a brief speech on her appointment since the appointed chair Dr. Francis Nangayo was out of the country. She thanked all the members for taking part and also thanked the outgoing chairman for the good work he has done to bring ABSF to where it is today. Dr. Stella Makokha gave a vote of thanks and closed with a word of prayer followed by cutting of the cake.



Outgoing Chairman Mr. Joseph Wekundah cuts the cake with the help of new Vice Chair Dr. Edwadina Otiemo and Prof. Norah Olembu

ABSF Attends Bt Cotton Task Force Meeting



Bt Cotton

On 8th of November 2012, ABSF collaborated with the Cotton Development Authority (CODA), Kenya Agricultural Research Institute (KARI) and Monsanto to host a consultative meeting that brought together key stakeholders of Bt cotton in Kenya. Among the topics discussed were the status and results of Bt Cotton research in Kenya, the regulatory and timeframe requirements for commercialization. The meeting also brought in some of the Kenyan farmers who went to Burkina Faso to shed light on

what they observed. At the end of the day, a road map showing tentative timelines was drawn and the Industry is in the process of making an application for open field trials of Bt cotton.

A Serial GMO Fear Monger Is Smoked Out

Kenyan Scientists Speak out against Séralini's Study

Despite the clear benefits of modern biotechnology towards food security, poverty alleviation and socio-economic development, this science continues to be engulfed in controversy that threatens to thwart its real value. Often, the discourse surrounding this crucial technology is hinged on misinformation and negative publicity fuelled by possible trade wars and not science. A case in point is a recent study linking genetically modified (GM) maize to cancer in rats.

In September, a French Professor - Gilles-Eric Séralini - released a report linking the development of cancerous tumours in rats to consumption of GM glyphosate-tolerant NK603 maize. As expected, the study has been used to propagate negative publicity against GMOs and has re-ignited a massive global debate. Sadly, this has raised concerns about the safety of genetically modified crops.

GMOs have been commercialized for food, feed and planting for the last 16 years with no adverse effects on human and animal health and the environment. A total of 16.7 million farmers in 29 countries worldwide have adopted GM crops. Evidently, the findings of this two year study go against a long history of safety and high uptake rates of GM crops. Moreover, the publicity that



followed the publication is dubious.

A number of credible bodies - the European Food Safety Authority included - and various renowned scientists have reviewed the study and are uniformly criticizing its objectives, flawed methodology and weak research design. The study is not based on sound science and deviates from internationally prescribed research principles and protocols. Agreeably, the data provided in the Seralini report does not support the conclusions and begs for answers. "Any scientist worth his salt will confess that the virgin albino-Dawley strains of rats used in the study are known to have a high incidence of spontaneous tumours."

A Serial GMO Fear Monger Is Smoked Out

Such tumours develop randomly with increasing age. The company Harlan that markets the Sprague-Dawley rodents confirmed this. Additionally, a study published in the Journal of Cancer Research and Clinical Oncology found that 81% of Sprague-Dawley rats naturally develop tumours. Having used a strain of rats prone to tumour development, it is misleading to link the development of tumours to GM.

In the Seralini study only 10 rats per sex were used – a blatant violation of the universally accepted experimental protocol. To make such conclusions based on this small number of rats is again misleading and leaves a high probability of chance in the tumor incidence observed. Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) guidelines demand that a minimum of 50 rats per sex be used.

In terms of the research methodology used, there was no statistical analysis for the mortality or tumor incidence. OECD internationally accepted protocols for long term toxicity and cancer studies currently recommended in the EU for food and feed safety assessment were not used in this study.

Besides, a lot has been said about the quality of feed. The quality of the GM feed given to the rats remains questionable as critical information on its integrity including formulation and contamination with toxins capable of causing disease and death is not reported. Furthermore, Seralini has made questionable conclusions on GM Maize in the past. In 2007, his reanalysis of data generated by Monsanto in support of safety of GM Maize Mon 863 made conclusions that could not be supported by the data. An expert panel looked at the

original data from Monsanto and the reanalysis by Seralini, and established that Seralini's conclusions did not relate to the data and did not prove adverse effects caused by Mon 683. It is therefore not surprising that the conclusions made in the current report are not supported by the data presented

The authors submitted incomplete data. Even for data that is provided, there seems to be no mortality difference between rats fed with water and conventional non-GM maize and those fed with 11% GM. Ironically, the mortality of rats fed with 33% GM was lower than those fed with 22% GM. These results, contrary to the conclusion made in the report, suggest that the GM maize was safer.

Given the flawed research methodology, the choice of the test rats and the sample size used in the study, the conclusions made were incorrect and misleading. We must not unnecessarily alarm the public. Debates on the benefits and perceived risks of modern biotechnology should be based on sound science and accurate reporting to enable Kenyans make informed decisions.

Safety of GMOs to human and animal health and the environment is an overriding priority. The Kenyan government has taken a forward looking stance in providing an enabling environment for the safe and responsible application of modern biotechnology. Significant developments include approval of the biotechnology policy in 2006 by the Cabinet, enactment of the Biosafety Act in 2009 and establishment of the National Biosafety Authority in 2010 to assure and ensure safe handling and use of GMOs.

Don't believe Seralini. His maize cancer study is full of dodgy and unscrupulous science.



Genetically Modified Maize

The recent cabinet decision to ban GM food imports in Kenya is unfortunate. However, what is worse is the basis of that decision. Sadly, the directive to ban trade and importation of GM foods was informed by a flawed and controversial study that recently generated worldwide headlines.

On 19 September 2012, a French Professor - Gilles-Eric Seralini - released a report linking the development of cancerous tumours in rats to consumption of GM glyphosate-tolerant NK603 maize. The study has been used to propagate negative publicity against GMOs, re-igniting a massive global debate and raising concerns about the safety of genetically modified crops.



Fortunately, the study's credibility has been shredded by renowned scientists, as well as a number of credible scientific bodies globally. Evaluations by six European Member (EU) States and the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) uniformly criticized the studies objectives, flawed methodology and weak research design. According to their assessments, the study is not based on sound science and deviates from internationally prescribed research principles and protocols.

“EFSA’s analysis has shown that deficiencies in the Seralini et al. paper mean it is of insufficient scientific quality for risk assessment” said Per Bergam, the leader of EFSA’s appraisal. “In addition, several national organisations were independently mandated by Member States to assess this study. These reviews have demonstrated a consensus among a significant part of the EU risk assessment community that the conclusions of Seralini et al. are not supported by the data in the published paper. We believe the completion of this evaluation process has brought clarity to the issue” he concluded.

In their final statement, EFSA along with four other EU Member States namely Germany, France, Denmark and Netherlands concluded that the publication by Seralini “does not provide information that would indicate the necessity to reopen the risk assessment on NK603 and glyphosate.”

A rare joint statement from six French Science Academies also rejected Seralini’s study. The six academies dismissed the study as a “scientific non-event” owing to severe flaws in the research design and methodology. “Given the numerous gaps in methods and interpretation, the data presented in this article cannot challenge previous studies which have concluded that NK603 corn is harmless from the health point of view, as are, more generally, genetically modified plants that have been authorised for consumption by animals and humans” the academies’ statement said. The academies went further to question Seralini’s ethics

and called to attention the gross misconduct and dubious manner in which the study was publicised. “Orchestrated media coverage around work without strong conclusions poses a major ethical problem” said the academies. “Hyping the reputation of a scientist or a team is a serious misdemeanour when it helps to spread fear among the public that is not based on any firm conclusion,” they added. In order to avoid scrutiny, Seralini and his co-authors manipulated some members of the media. The researchers agreed to provide advance copies of the study on condition that journalists would not show the paper to any other scientists for comments, evading criticism prior to publishing.

The study claims to be the first to look at the impact of eating GM diet over a lifetime in rats, which is two years. This again, is a bogus claim especially since the very same journal that featured Seralini’s study – *The Journal of Food and Chemical Toxicity* – published a review of 12 long term studies between 90 days to two years earlier in the year. The review by Chelsea Snell and her co-authors concluded that GM plants are nutritionally equivalent to their non-GM counterparts and can be safely used in food and feeds. A 104 week feeding study of GM soy bean published in the *Journal of Food Hygienic Society of Japan* also concluded that the long term intake of GM soybeans has no harmful effects on rats.

There have been hundreds of peer reviewed studies over the years that have demonstrated safety of GM crops. This coupled with a long history of safe use confirms safety of the technology. A handful of romanticized claims discounting the safety of biotechnology should not be used to inform important policy decisions.

Kenyans have nothing to fear. The government has taken a forward looking stance in providing an enabling environment for the safe and responsible application of modern biotechnology. Significant developments include approval of the biotechnology policy in 2006 by the Cabinet, enactment of the Biosafety Act in 2009 and establishment of the National Biosafety Authority in 2010 to assure and ensure safe handling and use of GMOs.

Russia Lifts Ban on Glyphosate Tolerant Maize

Russia has lifted the temporary ban on the import of glyphosate tolerant maize NK603. The temporary ban was announced after a French study reported that the biotech crop and the herbicide Roundup caused cancer to rats. However, the European Food Safety Agency (EFSA) rejected the report stating that there was no specific scientific evidence that the products are harmful to human or animal health and the environment. The Federal Service for Supervision of Consumer Rights Protection and Human Welfare (Rosпотребнадзор) also reported that Russia conducted a safety assessment of NK603 and found no adverse effects on human health. At present, NK603 is commercially available in 17 countries including U.S., China, Brazil, Japan, Argentina, and Canada.

For more information visit:

<http://www.fwi.co.uk/articles/05/01/2013/137029/russia-lifts-ban-on-monsanto-gm-maize.htm>

Prop 37: California Rejects Proposal to Label GMO foods

On November 6, 2012, Californians voted on Proposition 37, which would have required that foods produced from genetically engineered crops be labelled as such. It was defeated 53 to 47 percent. While there have been no long-term studies that suggest consuming genetically-modified foods are harmful to humans, supporters of Prop. 37 cited a lack of evidence to the contrary in their arguments for the measure. Opponents of the measure claimed they would be buried by the extra costs of printing new labels, and would have to pass that cost on to consumers. It is estimated state enforcement of the proposition would cost taxpayers between a few hundred thousand dollars to more than \$1 million annually, according to the Legislative Analyst's Office (LAO).

For more information visit:

<http://www.foodsafetynews.com/2012/11/why-did-proposition-37-fail/#.URwT8GfJOq4>

Environmentalist Who Opposed GMOs Admits He was Wrong

Until recently, the name Mark Lynas was little known outside the environmental community. An effective campaigner, Lynas has also written several well-received books, including *Six Degrees* and *The God Species*. To many in Europe, he is remembered as the individual who helped spur the anti-GM movement with a knack for the dramatic, such as leading the destruction of GM field trials. However, at a conference on farming at Oxford University, Lynas publicly apologised for his anti-biotech past and confessed to letting go of his anti-science stance which allowed him to begin appreciating biotechnology.

To read or hear Lynas' speech, visit:

<http://www.marklynas.org/2013/01/lecture-to-oxford-farming-conference-3-january-2013/>

Pictorial



Our Mission

ABSF's Mission is to create an innovative and enabling Biotechnology Environment in Africa through Education, Enhanced Understanding and Awareness creation on all aspects of Biotechnology, Biosafety and Intellectual Property Rights.

Our Vision

We envision an enabling environment for biotechnology development and application in Africa, sustained by a vibrant well networked and coordinated stakeholder base.

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