

BiosafeTrain News

Issue 2,

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Training for Biosafety

Editor: Joy Owango

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

It has been a busy time for the BiosafeTrain team since the proposal writing workshop in Flakkebjerg, Denmark. The plans for Phase 2 (Dec 2007 - Nov 2010) have now been formulated.

Most of the infrastructural projects proposed for Phase 1 are now in the construction phase. The new insect-proof Biosafety Level 2 glasshouse block at KARI is being built and expected to be completed by July 2007. Co-operation between Makerere University/BiosafeTrain and ICIPE on the development of the arthropod biosafety & quarantine lab is also underway.

We are preparing for the second biosafety course, on *Data Analysis for Biosafety Risk Assessment*, which will be held between 2nd and 6th July 2007 in Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania.

The floods that caused havoc on the Kenyan coast last year also swept away the field plots of our Nairobi students. Corrections are now underway. Serah Njeru Mwingi has got permission to move her experiment, which is on the interaction of wild and cultivated rice, to Mwea Experimental Station, in the Central Province. Serah established her plots there in March 2007.

The regional office has started taking contact with organizations in the region that are involved in biosafety. Several organisations showed keen interest to collaborate with us, and these links are being developed. It is also good to see that BiosafeTrain is increasingly recognised regionally and internationally. The BiosafeTrain team was invited to the Third Coordination Meeting For Governments and Organizations Implementing Biosafety Capacity-Building held in Zambia, and was co-organiser of the Second International Meeting of Academic Institutions and Organisations involved in Biosafety Education and Training, in Kuala Lumpur. See more details on this in the newsletter.

Joy Owango, Editor.

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PEOPLE & CHANGES

BiosafeTrain regional and communications office set up

BiosafeTrain now has a regional office that serves as a communications hub. This will be the centre of distribution of information for the East African and European partners and our growing mailing list. The office is located at the University of Nairobi:

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STUDENT ACTIVITIES

New student project started

MSc student Andy Howe (University of Copenhagen), who got a Danida MSc fellowship to work with BiosafeTrain on a field project in Uganda (see BiosafeTrain News issue 1), will fly to Africa on 18 May to start his field project in Uganda. Andy will share the experimental setup with another BiosafeTrain student, Simon Byagambi. The project will be co-supervised by Dr. Gabor Lövei.

First BiosafeTrain supported MSc Thesis submitted



Christine Munduru, a MSc student in Crop Science from Makerere University, and one of the students that BiosafeTrain supports, has finished her project and her Thesis is under evaluation by the supervisors. Christine's project is on the *Diversity of cotton arthropods in 3 regions in Uganda*. Christine did her studies in the North, Eastern and Central Uganda. Her research provides baseline information on arthropod biodiversity in cotton fields before the expected introduction of transgenic Bt cotton.

Ms. Christine Munduru

According to Christine's research, Northern and Eastern Uganda which are traditional cotton growing areas have low arthropod diversity and abundance. This is a result of the overuse of pesticides.

Second Biosafety Training Course to be held at the University of Dar- Es-Salaam

The second biosafety course on *Data Analysis for Biosafety Risk Assessment* will be held on 2-6 July 2007. The course will be held at the Continuing Education Centre of the University of Dar-es-Salaam, with the involvement of East African and Danish resource persons. The Nairobi-based Training Centre in Communication (TCC), in co-operation with BiosafeTrain will offer training in graphical methods in data exploration and analysis and on preparing posters.

BIOSAFETRAIN IN THE REGION AND WORLD-WIDE

Proposal writing workshop, 15- 20 February 2007

The BiosafeTrain Steering Committee held its meeting in February at the Flakkebjerg Research Centre of the University of Aarhus, Denmark. The objective of the meeting was to take stock on the project's infrastructural, training and financial management aspects, and to work on the budget for Phase 2 of the project, from December 2007 to November 2010. We developed the detailed work and financial plan and submitted this for evaluation and approval to Danida on 15 March 2007. New partnerships between BiosafeTrain and other biosafety projects were considered, and the communications strategy was introduced and discussed. The African members of the SC were able to experience some real winter, and perhaps more than they ever wanted: the only snowstorm of this winter closed down Copenhagen Airport, and some of our colleagues could leave only a day later than they intended.

Construction of the Biosafety Glasshouse Block at KARI, Nairobi

The new insect-proof glasshouse block at the Kenya Agriculture Research Institute (KARI), an important part of infrastructural development supported by BiosafeTrain, is in the construction stage. The structure is already up (see photo made in early April), and construction is expected to be completed by July 2007.



The new insect-proof glasshouse block at the Kenya Agriculture Research Institute (KARI).

Third Coordination Meeting for Governments and Organizations Implementing or Funding Biosafety Capacity-Building Activities Lusaka, Zambia, 26-28 February 2007

This meeting was hosted by the Government of Zambia, through the National Institute for Scientific and Industrial Research (NISIR). Participants came from around the globe representing national regulatory bodies, industry, donor agencies and educational institutes involved in capacity building in biosafety.

BiosafeTrain was represented by Dr Flora Ismail, from the University of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania (UDSM).

The meeting discussed criteria for the establishment of regional and sub-regional approaches to capacity-building in biosafety, including issues, practical experiences and future strategies. The recommendations from the groups were presented in a plenary and are to be forwarded to the next COP-MOP meeting in 2008.

Another key topic was the activity for building national capacities for implementation of the LMO identification and documentation requirements under Article 18, paragraph 2, of the Cartagena Protocol. The general

sentiment was that there was need for capacity building at all levels from point of LMO production to that of handling and utilization. The need for well-established regulation was also underscored.

At this forum, BiosafeTrain was considered a resourceful project that could contribute to educating stakeholders in collaboration with other capacity building efforts, such as the African Union Project in Biosafety.

BiosafeTrain at the UNEP GEF GM capacity building meeting, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, 16-18 April 2007

BiosafeTrain had been invited as co-organiser of the Second International Meeting of Academic Institutions and Organisations involved in Biosafety Education and Training, that took place in Kuala Lumpur, 16-18 April 2007.

The overall objective of the conference was to contribute to the enhancement of long-term education and training in biosafety in order to strengthen human resource capacities for the effective implementation of the Cartagena Protocol, particularly in the developing countries..

A number of presentations were made; the BiosafeTrain Project was introduced by Dr Richard Edema (Makerere University, Uganda).

Dr Flora Ismail (University of Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania) represented BiosafeTrain in the Steering Committee (made up by representatives from the CBD Secretariat, the University of Malaysia, BiosafeTrain, UNIDO and SDC, the Swiss international aid agency)

The four-day meeting discussed the need of specific biosafety postgraduate programmes (based on what is existing or not), strategies and mechanisms for promoting the development and delivery of academic programs in biosafety, drew up a needs assessment and a compendium of what should be posted on the Biosafety Clearing House to advertise available courses and programs.

There was general consensus that the secretariat should recommend at the next COP-MOP meeting (the meeting of the parties of the Cartagena Protocol, to be held in Bonn, Germany, in 2008) that national and regional coordination committees should be initiated. We have also had fruitful discussions with representatives of the African Union and the European Community how to co-operate in biosafety training in Africa.

Co-operation on the development of the arthropod biosafety & quarantine lab (ABSQLab) with ICIPE

Co-operation between BiosafeTrain and ICIPE on the development of the ABSQLab (arthropod biosafety & quarantine lab) is underway. ICIPE's Director General, Prof. Christian Borgemeister and BiosafeTrain partners at Makerere University, Uganda are in the process of drafting a Memorandum of Understanding. This collaboration would help to establish the ABSQLab, train its personnel, assist in obtaining authorisation and develop a joint research program.

NEW PUBLICATION

Lövei, G. L., Böhn, T. and Hilbeck, A. 2007 (*in press*). Biodiversity, ecosystem services and genetically modified organisms. *In: Traavik, T. and Lim, L.C. (eds.) Biosafety First: Holistic Approaches to Risk and Uncertainty in Genetic Engineering and Genetically Modified Organisms.* Tapir Academic Press, Trondheim, Norway

TALKS

“The effects of transgenic plants on beneficial organisms and biodiversity: a review of field data” held by G. Lövei at ICIPE, Kenya 27 March 2007.

G. Lövei also contributed to the MSc course on Biodiversity at the University of Nairobi, by giving a presentation on “Biodiversity and ecosystem services” at the Chiromo Campus, 28 March 2007.