BiosafeTrain News

Issue 4,

January-April 2008

Editor: Joy Owango

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

BiosafeTrain has begun its second phase. With it come lots of developments: the Uganda and Kenya infrastructural facilities funded by Phase 1 are almost complete and most of our students are expected to graduate this year.

BiosafeTrain is continuously being asked to participate in risk assessment workshops or seminars in the continent and abroad. Evidently the need for risk assessment before the introduction of GMOs is now considered a priority.

Last year we trained the Kenya National Environmental Management Authority field inspectors in the *Introduction to Risk Assessment* and as a result of this, we have being requested to train more biosafety and biotechnology related institutions in the same.

Later in the year we will have a students' training course in Uganda, which will be open to biosafety and biotechnology stakeholders in the region.

See more details inside.

Joy Owango, Editor. *Contact: joy.owango@agrsci.dk – www.biosafetrain.dk*

PEOPLE & CHANGES

Dr Ruth Amata, new BiosafeTrain representative at KARI

Dr. Ruth Amata has taken over from Dr. Josephine Songa as BiosafeTrain's representative at the Kenya Agricultural Research Institute-KARI. Dr. Amata has been Dr. Songa's deputy representative of the BiosafeTrain project. We thank Dr. Songa for her input and wish her well in her future career.

James Kanya obtains a position at University of Nairobi

James Kanya, PhD student

James Kanya, one of the "first generation" of BiosafeTrain PhD students has been offered a position as Assistant Lecturer at the University of Nairobi. James is our first student to obtain a university position, even before he has completed his PhD training. Warm congratulations to James, and we wish him success in his future carreer.

STUDENT ACTIVITIES

More BiosafeTrain students visit Denmark

Three students, Jane Tei M'Ringera and Serah Njeru (University of Nairobi) and Gerald Kyalo (Makerere University) visited Denmark in December 2007 and January 2008. These students have completed their research and are currently working on their Theses. Their month-long stay will allow them to interact with their Danish supervisors, have easy access to literature and advance the writing of their Theses. They are due to graduate this year.

BIOSAFETRAIN IN THE REGION AND WORLD-WIDE

BiosafeTrain begins Phase 2

BiosafeTrain started its second phase, which will last three years. Phase 2 began on 1 December 2007 and ends on 30 November 2010. The focus will be on further training in biosafety risk assessment to stakeholders, specialist training to students and completing the infrastructural developments the

project has initiated in Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania. A further round of MSc and PhD fellowships is also to be announced.

BiosafeTrain invited to Biotechtalk Forum 25 October 2007

Prof. Jenesio Kinyamario from the University of Nairobi gives a talk on "BiosafeTrain: Biosafety of genetically modified crops in East Africa".

BiosafeTrain was invited to the monthly BiotechTalk forum, organized by the Open Forum on Agricultural Biotechnology in Africa (OFAB) and the International Service for the Acquisition of Agri-biotech pplications(ISAAA). This monthly forum meets every Thursday and is a platform that brings together stakeholders in biosafety & biotechnology. BiosafeTrain's Nairobi.

BiosafeTrain trains Kenyan National Environmental Management Authority (NEMA) Field inspectors, Nairobi 5-10 November 2007

BiosafeTrain conducted a six-day training on biosafety risk assessment for NEMA field inspectors in November. The course included a visit to the KARI Biotechnology Centre's Biosafety Glasshouse in Nairobi and KARI Thika Centre which works on tissue culture propagation of different fruits. The participants admitted that the course was not only timely but also essential for the field inspectors, which went in line with the NEMA mandate.

Participants at the NEMA training course.

BiosafeTrain invited by UNEP-GEF to train at the 'Introductory Risk Assessment' workshop in Asmara, Eriteria

This workshop, held on 10-14 December 2007 was part of capacity building under the Eritrean Project on *Development of National Biosafety Frameworks* and aimed to introduce participants to the basic concepts of risk assessment and management. The training workshop also focused on the fundamental importance of risk assessment as an enabling "force" behind good decision making processes and the importance of an institutional arrangements and risk communication to the public.

BiosafeTrain was represented by Prof. Kinyamario who gave four talk: (1) *Risk assessment and risk management concepts, general principles, procedures/steps and methodologies: An overview*, (2) *Designing risk management practices: levels of containment & good laboratory practices*, (3) *Designing risk management practices: inspection & monitoring* and (4) *Setup for handling a notification through application, review, risk assessment and decision-making.*

DDRN workshop in Denmark 28-30 November 2007

Participants of the DDRN workshop.

A joint workshop on *Environmental consequences of growing GM crops in the developing countries* was held in November in Copenhagen, Denmark. The workshop was organized by University of Aarhus, under the auspices of the BiosafeTrain Project and IOBC Global working group on GMOs. It was sponsored by the Danish Development Research Network (DDRN) .The objective of the workshop was to present state-of-the-art of GM environmental impact knowledge with specific relevance to developing countries and to identify and discuss the main points of uncertainty.

The guest speakers were Dr. Andreas Lang, University of Basel, Switzerland who gave a talk on *Post-release monitoring regimes – is it possible to develop a blueprint?*, Prof. David Andow, University of Minnesota, USA who made a presentation on *Monitoring for GM resistance in developing countries* and Prof. Thure Hauser, Dept. Ecology, University of Copenhagen, Faculty of Life Sciences, Denmark who gave a talk on *Gene flow and its consequences in non-temperate countries*.

Construction of the Arthropod Biosafety & Quarantine Lab (ABSQL), Kampala Uganda

From the official opening of ABSQL.

The new Arthropod Biosafety & Quarantine Lab (ABSQL) at Makerere University Agricultural Research Institute at Kabanyolo (MUARIK), another important part of infrastructural development supported by BiosafeTrain, is almost completed. The ABSQL has been renovated and fenced plus has a pyramid like brick structure incinerator built.

What is left is the installation of air conditioning, a new consignment of insect rearing cages donated by Prof. Samuel Kyamanywa Makerere University and the certification of the lab by the National Biosafety Council.

This is the only such facility in Uganda; there is a similar one at the International Centre of Insect Physiology and Ecology (ICIPE) in Kenya, with whom the project is developing a collaboration.

KARI Biosafety Glasshouse Block in the final stages of construction

The new insect-proof glasshouse block at the Kenya Agriculture Research Institute (KARI), another part of infrastructural development supported by BiosafeTrain, is almost completed. Construction is expected to end by March

2008, and after the certification of the laboratory by the Kenya Plant Health Inspectorate Services (KEPHIS), it will be available to KARI biosafety researchers.

Student workshop planned in Uganda

BiosafeTrain will hold its fourth student workshop , which will also be open to interested participants on biosafety risk assessment. The 10 students supported by BiosafeTrain are expected to give a presentation about their progress.

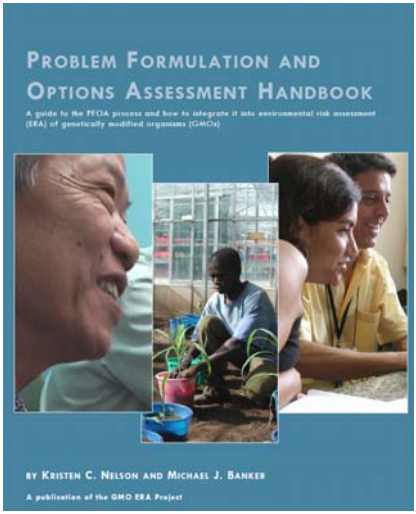
BiosafeTrain invited by World Bank sponsored Forum

BiosafeTrain has been selected by the World Bank to present the project as a model *Innovative Agricultural Development Project in Africa* at the forum on *Developing Agriculture and Food Industry Innovation in Africa*, to be held in May 2008 in Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania.

BiosafeTrain is one of five selected projects.

The selection was based on whether the case studies included the development, dissemination and application of agriculture, food industry, rural energy or physical environment technologies and each case study was then ranked according to four key criteria: (1) achieved scale (2) private sector involvement, (3) agricultural producer organization participation and (4) contribution to poverty reduction.

Problem Formulation and Options Assessment Handbook available



A new product from our collaborating project, GMO-ERA has been published. The *Problem Formulation and Options Assessment (PFOA) Handbook*, written by Dr. Kristen Nelson and Michael Banker, serves as a guide to the stakeholder analysis process and describes how to integrate it into environmental risk assessment (ERA) of genetically modified organisms (GMOs).

The methodology is explained and guidance provided for the integration of PFOA into a country's environmental risk assessment procedures for GMOs.

The handbook includes techniques and resources that can assist in designing, implementing, and conducting a country-specific PFOA, while recognizing that each country has particular contexts and needs.

The audiences for the PFOA Handbook are the government agencies and personnel responsible for conducting risk assessments of GMOs within a particular country, and anyone who would participate in a PFOA process or seek to include it in the governance of GMOs. It can be downloaded freely from: www.gmoera.umn.edu/public/publications/.

IMPRESSIONS FROM FALL 2007

Dr. Andreas Lang, University of ,Basel, Switzerland (left) and Prof. David Andow, University of Minnesota (right) were some of the invited speakers at the DDRN workshop held in Copenhagen.

The interior of the new arthropod biosafety and quarantine lab at Makerere University Agricultural Research Institute at Kabanyolo (MUARIK), another important part of infrastructural development supported by BiosafeTrain. The lab is almost completed.