

COUNTRY REPORT MAURITIUS

- NPMT- 3 persons (Mauritius FANRPAN node,
Government representative, Private Sector)
- NRP- Mr Harris Neeliah

COUNTRY REPORT

MAURITIUS

- **Stakeholder analysis**
- **Biosafety system**
- **Main export products/GM crops of interest**
- **Food aid/food security**

Stakeholder analysis

Methodology: Questionnaire-administered interview

34 representatives from:

- **Academia (5)**
- **Regulatory bodies (6)**
- **Research and development organisations (5)**
- **Professional organisations (4)**
- **Civil society and consumer organisations (2)**
- **Laboratories and standard setting organisations (2)**
- **Interested stakeholders (2)**
- **Input suppliers and private sector (4)**
- **Others (2)**

Stakeholder analysis - Findings

Opinion on and impact of GM crops

- 35.3% - no opinion
- 44.1% - GM has a positive impact
- 20.6% - GM has a negative impact

Study showed that those with an optimistic view of impact of GM crops had a biological scientific background. Those belonging to civil society and consumers organizations were more pessimistic

Stakeholder analysis - Findings

- Ranking of possible benefits
 1. Increased yields
 2. Herbicide resistance
 3. Disease resistance
 4. Increase profits for farmers
 5. Cheaper foods for consumers
 6. Reduce costs of production
 7. Improved nutritional quality
 8. Improved product quality

Stakeholder analysis - Findings

- Knowledge about the technology
Stakeholders have good knowledge
90% of stakeholders claim consumers have poor awareness*

* No formal studies on GM foods have been carried out on awareness and acceptance of Mauritian consumers

Stakeholder analysis - Findings

- Concerns about genetic modification
4 main categories:
 1. Food safety
 2. Environment
 3. Socio-economic
 4. Ethical

Stakeholder analysis - Findings

- Public perception and willingness to buy GM products
 - The public in general lacks information about agricultural GM
 - Those aware are either reticent or fear side effects of GM foods
 - 38.2% stakeholders are willing to buy GM food if of same price as conventional food
 - 44.1 stakeholders willing to buy if cheaper than food produced in conventional ways - suggesting price can be a determinant factor in GM food acceptance

Stakeholder analysis - Findings

- GM production locally
 - 55.9% respondents aware that sugarcane has been genetically modified in Mauritius
 - 9/34 of opinion that GM sugar has been commercialised
- Only sugarcane has been genetically modified locally- but no field trial has so far been approved

Stakeholder analysis - Findings

- Trade of GM crops

- 50% respondents of opinion that Mauritius is an importer of GMOs

Maize imported from Argentina is certified to contain grains from GM events and therefore GM feed is used in Mauritius. Soyabean also imported from Canada, a producer and exporter of GM soya - high probability that Mauritius import GM maize and soyabean

Stakeholder analysis - Findings

- **International agreements**
 - 20.6% respondents aware that Mauritius has ratified the Cartagena Protocol
 - only one stakeholder aware that Mauritius is signatory to SPS (Sanitary and Phytosanitary) and TBT (Technical barrier to Trade) agreements

Stakeholder analysis - Findings

- **Biosafety framework**
 - 53% respondents aware that Mauritius has enacted a GMO legislation and that a NBC instituted - Only 5 respondents knew that only part of the Act has been proclaimed
 - 35.3% respondents considered that it was necessary to have a GMO Act

Stakeholder analysis - Findings

- **IPRs**
 - 38.2% respondents of opinion that courts/judiciary system enforce compliance with Patents, Industrial design and Trademark Act and Copyrights Act. 11.8% thought that they did not. The remaining did not know if they enforced or not.
 - Two Bills are in preparation (Plants Varieties Bill & Seed Bill). There is a need to assess their use in accord with existing legislation to protect IPRs of GM agro-products

Stakeholder analysis - Findings

- **Harmonized regional biosafety systems**
 - 73.5% respondents recognized importance for a harmonized regional biosafety system. However, difficulty to materialize it was acknowledged.
 - Main constraints: financial, infrastructural, legal, capacity and expertise.

Stakeholder Analysis - Recommendation

- Considerable gap of knowledge between what stakeholders know and actual state of affairs - a need to address this issue
- National Biotechnology Strategy lacking and needs to be formulated
- Legislations needs - Plant Breeders Right and Seed Bills
- Capacity needs to allow implementation, monitoring and enforcing of GMO Act
- Need to attach a Technical arm to the NBC
- Need to boost public confidence - provide information
- Regional approach - SADC to establish a concerted and integrated approach to deal with agricultural trade, including GM foods

Biosafety

- Institutional Biosafety Committee- 1 Research Institution
- UNEP/GEF capacity building project - National Biosafety Guidelines for Safe Development and Introduction of GMOs in Mauritius prepared in 1999 (MSIRI)
- CBD - Mauritius, first signatory to convention in 1992. Has ratified the Convention in 2003
- Legislation - GMO Act 2004- partly proclaimed
- National Biosafety Committee constituted

Agriculture

Sugar

- In last 30 years, move from mono crop sugar cane to a diversified one
- With erosion of preferential treatment under sugar protocol, change in policies resulting in Sugar Sector Strategic Plan to increase competitiveness and promoting diversification within sugar

Non-sugar

- Non Sugar Sector Strategic Plan to increase food crop production locally

Agriculture

- With increase in diversification, Mauritius is no longer a major food crops importer
- Tomato and potato production has remained almost constant over the last 10 years
- Maize production has dropped since 1993 - due to high cost of production locally

Agriculture and food imports

- Mauritius classified as a net food importer
- Food imports have increased steadily over last 10 years - accounted by increase in number of tourists and a more diversified and sophisticated demand from Mauritians
- Major agricultural imports are cereals and staples - rice, wheat - from Australia, France, Pakistan, India, China
- Maize import primarily for poultry and livestock production - majority imported from Argentina - GM ?
- Also a major milk and dairy importer- from Australia, New Zealand and Europe

Agriculture exports

- Main agricultural export is sugar accounting for 90% of total agricultural exports
- In last 5 years, a dramatic increase in exports of fish and fish preparations recorded - destined for EU and Reunion

Food aid

- Food aid received reached a peak of 64 000 T in early 1980s (wheat, cereals and rice) - received under aegis of World Food Programme
- Countries sending food aid: UK, France, USA, Australia, Canada, Japan, Denmark, Finland, Sweden, Austria, Netherlands, Ireland, Greece, Turkey and Switzerland
- Food aid drastically reduced to almost nil in mid 1990s

Conclusion

- Mauritius does not suffer from chronic food insecurity at present - therefore potential benefits of agri-biotechnology in ensuring food security is not pertinent locally
- Highly probable that GM foods and feed are imported - therefore proper risk assessments to be carried out to ensure that Mauritian consumers have possibility to make an informed choice
- Mauritius has progressed in setting up a biosafety framework, by enacting a GMO legislation. This must be fully proclaimed and the various components of the regulatory system put in place to ensure full benefits to be derived from GMOs and GM products

Thank you for listening