Key recommendations

IV. Infrastructure, Facilities and Equipment

- The Government recognizes the critical role of biotechnology in achieving economic growth, poverty alleviation and wealth creation.
- It pronounces the Government’s commitment to provide an enabling environment for the acquisition and development of biotechnology responsibly for speedy exploitation of the immense potential in agriculture, environment, bioresources, health and industry.

Moreover, the Government will ensure that information on the development and use of the bio-technology is accurately and transparently disseminated to the public and industry to allow informed choices on its application while respecting their traditional methods of production.

For more information: Biosafety Office

www.biosafetykenya.co.ke

Production of this Pocket K is a collaborative initiative among the National Council for Science and Technology (NCST), Ministry of Agriculture - The Program for Biosafety Systems (PBS) of IPPI and ISAAA AfriCenter

Pocket Ks are Pockets of knowledge, packaged information on crop biotechnology products and related issues available at your fingertips.

They are produced by the global Knowledge Center on Crop Biotechnology (http://www.isaaa.org/kc). For more information, please contact the International Service for the Acquisition of Agri-biotech Applications (ISAAA) SEAsiaCenter c/o IRRI, DAPO Box 7777, Metro Manila, Philippines.

Tel: +63-2-845 0563
Fax: +63-2-845 0606
E-mail: knowledge.center@isaaa.org

Kenya Biotechnology Development Policy

Highlights

1. Prioritization and Coordination of Research and Development

The policy defines a road map for biotechnology and should effectively guide the country into a pre-eminent position of a knowledge-based economy for overall sustainable economic growth, poverty alleviation and wealth creation.

It pronounces the Government’s commitment to provide an enabling environment for the acquisition and development of biotechnology responsibly for speedy exploitation of the immense potential in agriculture, environment, bioresources, health and industry.

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Introduction

Biotechnology is any technological application that uses living organisms, or derivatives thereof to make or modify new products or improve existing ones. While advances in biotechnology have great potential to improve the economy, it is imperative that it be applied systematically, responsibly and in a way that responds to the country’s priority needs. In this regard, the government of Kenya has developed a comprehensive national policy to guide research, development and commercialisation of modern biotechnology products. The policy, which was approved in September 2006, has been the result of several years of work involving all major biotechnology stakeholders nationally, internationally and relevant government departments.

Key Features of the Policy

The policy outlines six priority areas of focus:

1. Agricultural Biotechnology
   - Biotechnologies to develop new plant varieties with beneficial genetic traits for pest and disease resistance, improved nutritional value, tolerance to drought and salinity. Special attention will be paid to conservation of germplasm of traditional and wild crop plants.
   - Animal reproductive biotechnologies such as artificial insemination, embryo transfer, genetic improvement of local breeds, and somatic cell nuclear transfer (cloning) techniques. Special attention will be paid to the development of livestock that are resistant to diseases, have improved meat, milk or wool quality, can increase proteins in their milk or meat (biopharm animals), or which have characteristics that are environmentally friendly.
   - New plant and animal diagnostic products, improved animal vaccines, biological pesticides, herbicides and fertilizers

2. Education
   - Reviewing of curricula at all levels to promote the spirit of scientific inquiry by encouraging independent student projects, exposing students and teachers to biotech activities in Kenya and internationally through study tours, expert guest lectures; and promoting acquisition of entrepreneurial skills.
   - Strengthening the teaching of biosciences at the formal education level.
   - Attracting and retaining talent in biosciences.
   - Developing scientific and related infrastructures.
   - Spearheading formal and informal public education and awareness creation programs.

3. Bioresources
   - The Government will support the following priority activities for fast-tracking economic exploitation of biodiversity:
     - The development of a centrally managed database on species in different ecosystems and the traditional knowledge associated with the species.
     - Creation of research fund to facilitate molecular characterization and bioprospecting for novel products for development and industrial production.
     - Establishment of national culture collection centers for the preservation and utilization of economically beneficial microorganisms.
     - Accelerate the establishment of viable in situ and ex situ (Gene banks) conservation centers.
     - Focused exploitation of fauna, flora and microbes in marine and extreme habitats for novel genes for development of osmo tolerant crops, enzymes, biopolymers, marine pollution biosensors, bioactive molecules, etc.

What does the Policy mean for Kenya?

The policy charts the vision of the Kenyan government towards the development and safe application of biotechnology. It provides those developing and applying the technology with a clear framework under which to operate.

The policy commits the government to give priority to the provision of relevant institutional, infrastructural and legislative framework and, in particular, the enactment of new legislation on biosafety.

What are the objectives of the Policy?

Some of the key objectives of the policy are to:

1. Prioritize, promote, and coordinate research in basic and applied bio-sciences.
3. Create enabling administrative and legal frameworks for biotechnology development and commercialisation.
4. Develop mechanisms for the provision of sustainable funding for biotechnology research and products development.
5. Support and facilitate capacity building on all aspects of biotechnology including intellectual property access and protection, biosafety and bioethics.
6. Support the development and retention of human resources in science, innovation and biotechnology.
7. Stimulate collaboration among public, private sectors and international agencies in order to advance biotechnology both locally and internationally.
8. Promote public understanding of the potential benefits and address stakeholder concerns/issues on modern biotechnology.

Scope of the policy

The policy covers all biotechnology applications, including tissue culture and micro-propagation, biopesticides and biofertilizers, livestock technology, DNA Marker technology, and genetic engineering. It also covers research, development and use of biotechnology in various key fields such as agriculture, environment, human and animal health and industry.

The policy takes cognizance of international instruments, such as the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety.