

# Southern Africa Regional Biosafety Programme (SARB)

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# Objectives

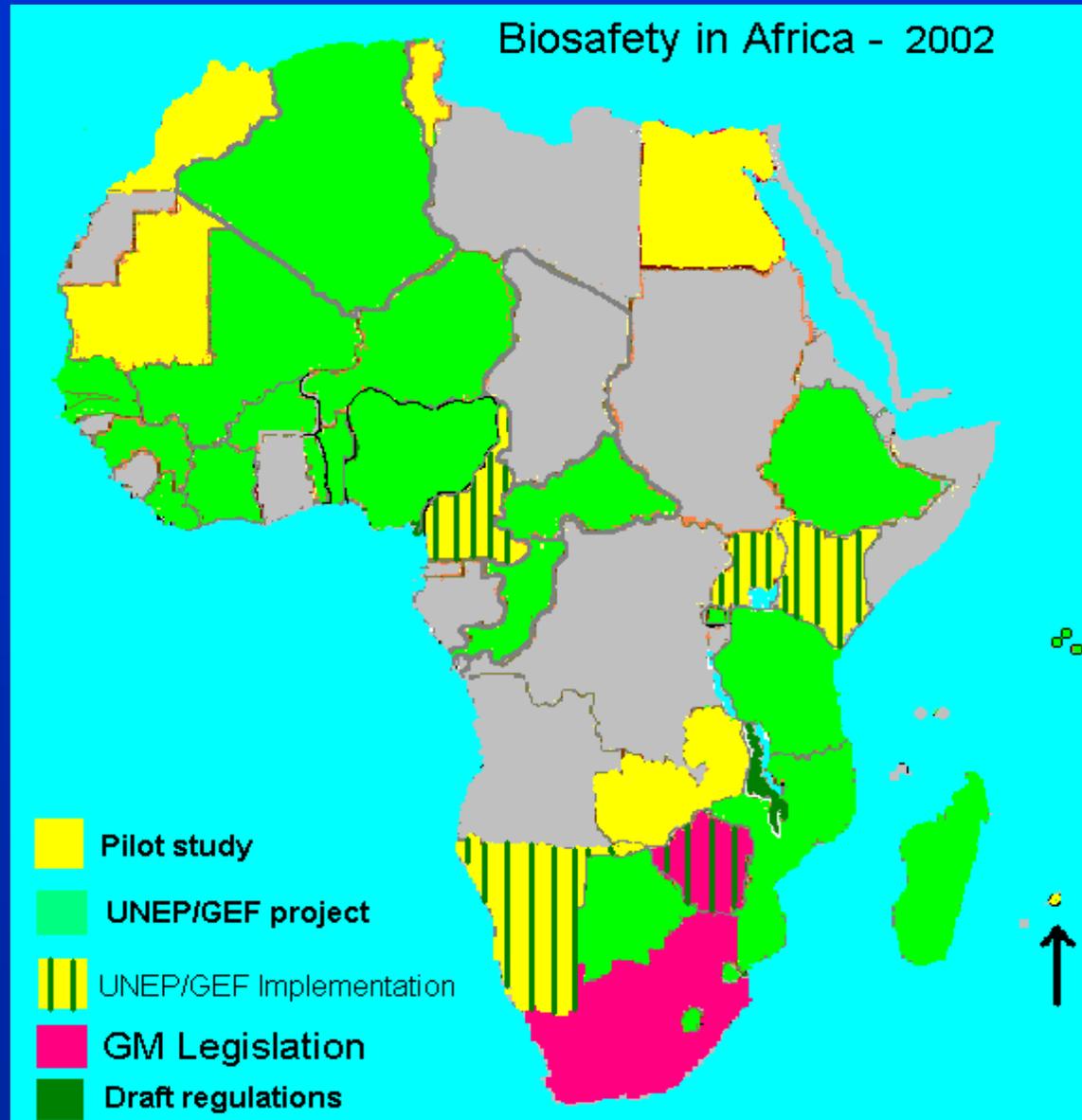
## Overall Objective:

“To build regional policy and technical capacity in Southern Africa to support science based regulation of the development, commercial application and trade in agricultural products derived from modern biotechnology”

## Specific Objective:

“To lay the regulatory foundation that will support the field testing of genetically engineered products in at least 4 of the 7 target countries in Southern Africa”

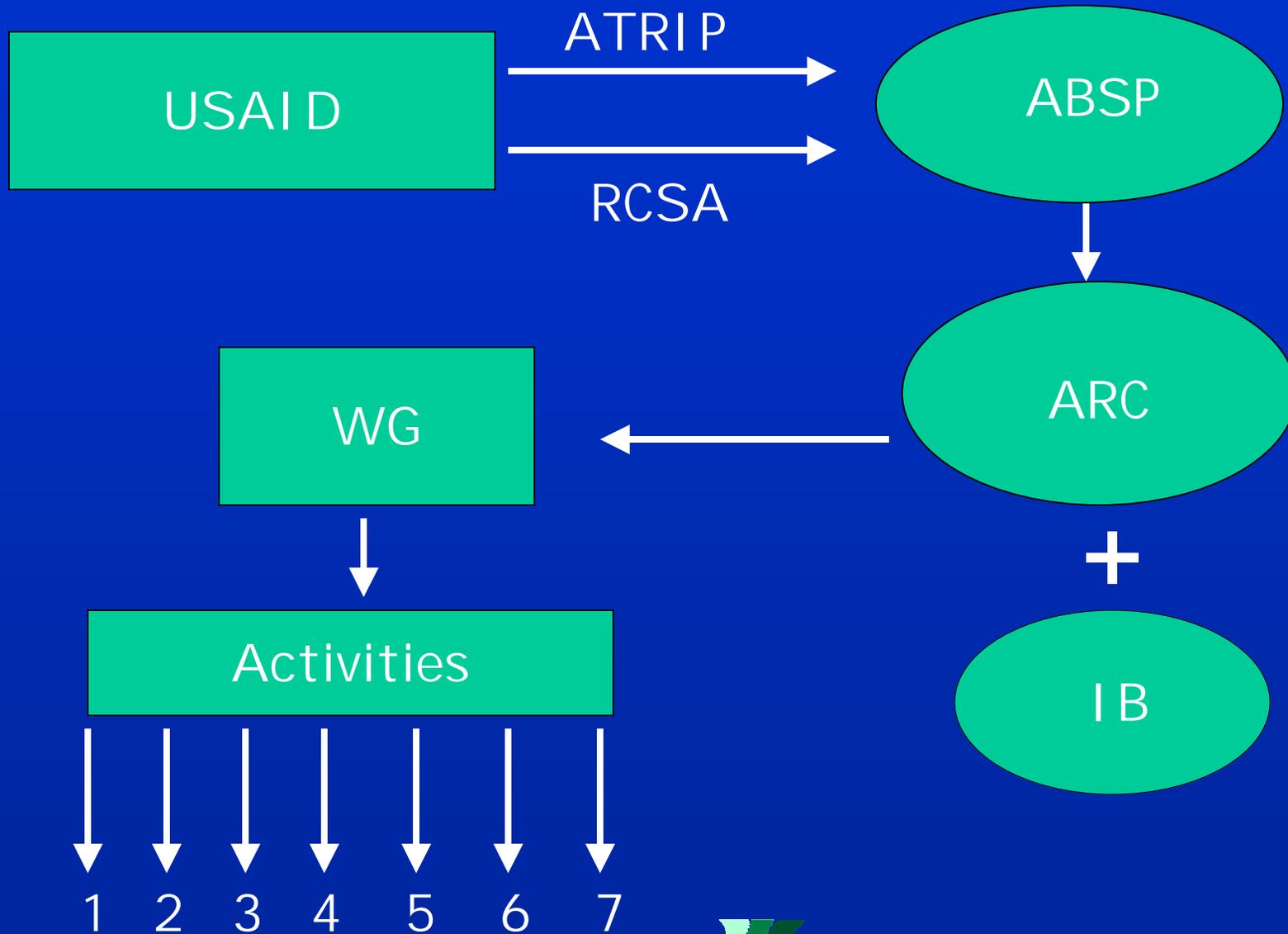
# Current Status of Biosafety in Africa



# Roleplayers in the SARB Program

- Agricultural Biotechnology Support Project (ABSP) at Michigan State University: Contracting Agent
- ARC-Roodeplaat Vegetable and Ornamental Plant Institute in South Africa: Biosafety Training, Organisation of Workshops and Training Courses
- Innovation Biotechnology: Biosafety Training, Organisation of Workshops and Training Courses
- Southern African (SADC) Country delegations: Participation in activities
- USAID Washington and RCSA: Backstopping and Fundraising

# SARB Program: Diagram



# Core Target Countries

“Countries most likely to receive applications for GMO field trials or commodity imports in the near future”

- Mauritius
- Mozambique
- Malawi
- Namibia
- South Africa
- Zambia
- Zimbabwe

# SARB Activities

- Establish Regional Working Group : Delegates from Core Target Countries
- Regional Workshop on Biosafety Needs and Priorities
- Regional Journalist and Media Course
- Regional Biosafety Training Course
- In-Country Biosafety Capacity Building: 7 Core countries
- Risk Assessment: Sorghum gene flow case study
- Target Group Biotechnology Field Trip: China

# Activity 1: Establish Working Group

- Governments of 7 Target countries nominated representatives of each country to be part of the SARB Working Group
- Held in Pretoria, South Africa in November 2000, attended by 16 delegates from 6 Target countries
- Delegate buy-in and approval of SARB Program was achieved
- Delegates committed to:
  - Encourage participation in SARB activities
  - Identify suitable candidates for participation
  - Develop a proposal for SARB in-country activities

# Working Group Meeting



# Activity 1: Country visits

In order to prepare for the SARB Regional Biosafety Workshop, 9 of the 14 SADC countries were visited :

To assess status of biosafety;

to ensure that appropriate delegates be nominated;

to identify key contact persons in non-target countries.

# Activity 2: Regional Biosafety Workshop

- 48 delegates from 11 countries  
(Botswana, Lesotho, Swaziland, Tanzania)
- 28-31 March 2001 in Pretoria
- Raised the level of awareness on biosafety issues
- Provided the opportunity to delegates to discuss regional issues
- Delegates realised that inter-departmental co-operation will be necessary to establish biosafety structures.

# Activity 2: Regional Biosafety Workshop

- I identified need for a regional biosafety focal point, set up under the SADC structure
- An interim Steering Committee will formulate a proposal to be submitted to the SADC Biodiversity Forum in Malawi.
- The final proposal will also be submitted to UNEP-GEF for funding of a Regional Biosafety Focal Point in Southern Africa.

The delegates will also encourage SADC countries to sign and ratify the Biosafety Protocol.

# Regional Biosafety Workshop



# Activity 3: Journalist Workshop on Biotechnology in Africa

- Attended by 17 agricultural and food journalists from the 7 target countries.
- 22-23 May 2001 in Pretoria
- Workshop Sessions included :
  - Review of GM media reports
  - Preferred format for material submitted to media
  - presented this information to Scientists/Regulators attending the AfricaBio/USDA/CIMMYT "Communication for Success" Workshop
  - Interview and networking opportunities with scientist and regulators



# Activity 4 REGIONAL BIOSAFETY TRAINING COURSE

23 Regulators and reviewers (3) (not previously trained) from each target country

- 5 - 10 November 2001
- Pretoria, South Africa

## Objectives:

- To train regulators and reviewers to be able to make science based assessments on proposals submitted for review
- To form a critical mass of reviewers in the region and also in each target country
- To harmonise Biosafety review policies in the region
- Work book developed by ABSP

# Activity 5: IN-COUNTRY BIOSAFETY TRAINING

- Target audience: As requested by target country
- Duration: 3 - 5 days in each country
- Venue: As suggested by each target country
- Objectives:
  - To request Working Group members to develop a business plan for in-country training courses (where, who, what, logistics)
  - To do Biosafety training in target countries that address the specific needs of the country

# Activity 5: Progress

## Malawi

- Dates: 13 - 16 November 2001
- Courses
  - Decision and policy makers (1 day – 29 delegates)
  - Journalists (1 day – 26 delegates)
  - Scientists (2 days – 34 delegates)

## Mozambique

- Dates: 6 - 7 December 2001
- Course: General introduction to biotechnology and biosafety
- Delegates: Regulators, decision makers, scientists
- Total: 55

# Activity 5: Progress

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## Mauritius

- Dates: 28 October – 1 November 2002
- Courses
  - Biosafety Regulation (1 day)  
30 - 35 scientists, regulators and decision makers
  - Implications of International Agreements (1 day)  
30 - 35 scientists, regulators, decision makers and lawyers
  - Public Awareness (1 days)  
50 students, journalists, policy makers, lawyers and general public

# Activity 5: Progress

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## Zambia

- Dates: 27-31 May 2002
- Courses
  - Decision and policy makers (1 day – 15 delegates)
  - Journalists (1 day – 23 delegates)
  - Scientists (2 days – 23 delegates)

## Zimbabwe

- Dates: November 2002?
- Courses
  - Scientists (3 days)
  - Inspectors (2 days)



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# Activity 5: Progress

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## South Africa

- Dates: 1 – 8 October 2002
- Courses:
  - Regulators (Executive committee – 1 day – 8 delegates)
  - Reviewers (Advisory Committee – 3 days – 32 delegates)
  - Inspectors (2 days – 21 delegates)

## Namibia

- No courses - Other funds for biosafety training
- SARB funding applications for GMO field trial etc to test proposed biosafety legislation



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# Activity 6: Risk assessment research: Sorghum gene flow study

- Sorghum's centre of origin is in Africa
- Risk assessment research to be done at ARC-Roodeplaat, Pretoria – planting November 2002
- Review horizontal gene flow in sorghum and related species and to study gene flow to obtain Biosafety data
- Results and data available for Southern African Region as an African case study

# Activity 7: "*Biotechnology in Action*" visit

- Target country: China
- 2 delegates from each target country
- Date: 7 – 15 August 2002
- Objectives:
  - Delegates to meet with regulatory officials, researchers, farmers in developing country
  - Observe field tests
  - Examine legislation and procedures



# Constraints and Concerns

- In-Country Politics and lack of Commitment to participate in SARB activities
- Countries in Southern Africa at different levels of implementation of biosafety structures
- Lack of Political Will to implement Biosafety Structures and to utilise GM technology and products
- Lack of co-ordination between different government departments involved in Biosafety

# Constraints and Concerns

- SADC structure inefficient to house Regional Biosafety Focal Point
- No Public awareness and acceptance strategies in SADC
- Trade barriers : Namibian Beef export issue
- Anti-GM : Ethiopian influences on SADC countries

# Conclusions

- SARB Program – 2 years underway
- SARB Working Group established and networking
- 5 Major SARB activities completed
- Networking also established in non-target countries
- Coordination with other similar activities in the region
- Basic Biotech awareness addressed through Biosafety Workshops and Journalist Workshops in SADC countries

# Recent developments

- FANR Ministers meeting – Maputo 2002
  - Regional biosafety proposal
  - Regional biosafety consultant
- SADC Heads of States meeting – Angola October 2002
  - Confirmed regional biosafety protocol
  - Establishing GMO committee
- Details not yet published
- Link into these? SARB II?
- Coordinate with other regional activities
  - BTZ RAIN
  - AfricaBio Regional Public Awareness & dialogue

# Research Needs

- Nutritional deficiencies
- Biotic stresses
  - Diseases
- Abiotic stresses
  - drought

# Research Constraints

- National R & D strategies
- Funding for biotechnology research
- IP – costs, legislation
- Biosafety – costs, legislation

# Other details

- Project Duration:

- November 2000 - June 2003

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