

## PRESS RELEASE

### **African countries need biosafety laws to benefit from new and emerging technologies**



**(Nairobi: December 3, 2020)** The inability of many African countries to domesticate the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) has hindered the effective deployment of new and emerging technologies to support agricultural development on the continent, an expert has said.

Mr Sunday Akile, Senior Programme officer at AUDA-NEPA made the observation during the AATF webinar that discussed Enabling Environment for Safeguarding and Commercializing Agricultural Innovations in Africa.

He said although most countries in Sub-Saharan Africa endorsed the Cartagena protocol and its subsidiaries (Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit-sharing), they have failed to establish national laws to replicate the protocol and pave way for the practice of modern biotechnology in their jurisdiction.

“The CBD has been ratified by almost all members of the global community. Over 89 per cent of African countries have either ratified the Cartagena Protocol or acceded to it.



Parties are obligated to domesticate the same in their countries by formulating local laws for implementation of obligations under the Cartagena Protocol for Biosafety (CPB),” he noted.

According to him, most countries are lagging in creating national laws and policies to domesticate the global convention thereby denying the deployment of agricultural biotechnology that has the potential of improving African agriculture, which is the continent’s backbone.

Mr. Akile who oversees biosafety, legal and policy issues at the AUDA-NEPAD regretted that in spite of the potential that agricultural biotechnology tools such as genetic modification brings, most countries have “continued to look at strict liability requirement for different reasons. This is greatly influenced by anti-GM activists and it discourages investors.”

He urged countries that do not have biosafety laws in place to do so as a matter of urgency, stressing that “they must rely on science to develop their legislation, be very mindful of the text and language that can create hurdles for the implementation of such laws.”

Nations with strict liability regimes have been less attractive to prospective commercial investors in the deployment of biotech materials on the continent, he added.

He cited the instance where countries included under socio-economic consideration issues of culture and tradition, this according to him, will be very difficult to deal with in a court of law.

“African governments need to formulate policies and laws that will allow for the full exploitation of the potential of the technology in the agriculture sector. Innovation and Regulation should co-evolve. Regulations put in place should not aim at stifling innovation as Africa can best transform its social economic wellbeing through innovations.

He noted that agriculture remained a strategic platform on which the continent can launch its development, hence the desire to make it attractive to the younger generation with the deployment of affordable and sustainable technologies.

The Webinar was moderated by Dr Denis Kyetere, AATF Executive Director, and featured Dr John Mukuka, Seed Development Expert from COMESA, Mr Ben Rivoire, Head of Seed Sector at UPOV and Dr Francis Nang’ayo AATF Head of Policy and Regulatory Affairs.

## About AATF:

AATF is an African-led not-for-profit organization that is working towards agricultural transformation to address food and nutrition security with the aim of generating health and wealth for smallholder farmers in Africa through access and delivery of innovative and fitting agricultural technologies. AATF believes that farmers in Africa will become globally competitive through use of the best technology, optimal agricultural practices,



strategic product value addition and boosted access to efficient markets within and outside Africa. <https://www.aatf-africa.org/about-us/>

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