

## KARI IN A NEW REGIONAL *Bt*-COTTON PROJECT

By

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A project proposal number IPO1 – 06-“**Baseline biodiversity impact studies of transgenic *Bt*-cotton on wild ecosystems in the East African region**” was prepared by scientists from three institutions of the East African countries Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania in response to proposal call for the year 2006. The project funded by the Programme for Biosafety Systems through the BBI programme was awarded **US\$ 327,878** to run for a period of three years with the Tanzanian Tropical Pesticide Research Institute (TPRI) as the lead institution in collaboration with Kenya Agricultural Research Institute (KARI) and Makerere University (Uganda).

The project launched in a regional meeting for Africa held at the Hilton Hotel Nairobi on 12<sup>th</sup> February 2007 aims at



assessing the impact of the introduction and use of transgenic *Bt*-cotton on the native cotton species biodiversity and arthropod biodiversity in the Eastern African region. The objectives include;

- To study and evaluate the ecological consequences of gene flow between transgenic *Bt* cotton and feral cotton populations and wild cotton relatives in Kenya Uganda and Tanzania;
- To assess the impact of transgenic *Bt* cotton on arthropod biodiversity in Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda;

The implementation of the project will include the following activities

- Determining the distribution and ecology of wild relatives of cotton. Populations will be surveyed, identified and samples will be taken for conservation and use in the experiments described in this proposal.
- Evaluating the potential ecological consequences of gene flow between transgenic *Bt* cotton and feral cotton populations and wild cotton relatives.
- Obtaining baseline data on arthropod biodiversity in and near fields of *Bt*-cotton, in populations of feral cotton and native cotton.
- Determining the impact of *Bt*-cotton on non-target pests.

The expectations of the project are that it will provide data on which the regional regulatory and national biosafety councils of the partner countries will base their future assessment and approval processes for transgenic cotton. In addition, the knowledge base created and the partnerships formed among the collaborating public and private institutions will lead to the formation of common understanding and a faster development of the harmonized laws, regulations, operating procedures, and review and management processes for testing and commercialization of transgenic cotton and other transgenic crops in the East African region.