

Back – to – office Report on
Visit to Addis Ababa, Ethiopia for the
The ACTESA/COMESA Regional Communication Workshop and COP-MOP7 preparatory meetings

18th to 20th August 2014

D. W. Miano,
Department of Plant Science and Crop Protection, University of Nairobi.

Background

I was invited to attend two meetings

- I. The ACTESA/COMESA regional communication workshop (18-19th August 2014)
- II. COP-MOP7 preparatory meeting (20th August 2014)

In both case, I attended the meetings as a stakeholder and an expert in biotechnology and biosafety.

1. The ACTESA/COMESA Regional Communication Workshop

The regional consultative and communications workshop on biotechnology and biosafety workshop was organized by Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), through its specialized agency, the Alliance for Commodity Trade in Eastern and Central Africa (ACTESA), and in collaboration of the Ministry of Environment and Forest (FDR) Ethiopia. This was a follow-up to the 32nd Meeting of the Council of Ministers in February 2014, where the COMESA Policy on Biotechnology and Biosafety was adopted, taking into account the sovereign right of each Member State. The goal of the workshop was to raise awareness on the developments to date of the COMESA Biotech and Biosafety Policy approval as well as allow member states to discuss on the next steps towards implementation of the regional policy.

The specific objectives for the workshop were:

- i. To provide an update to country biosafety focal points and other key stakeholders on the process and roadmap leading to the development, endorsement and approval of the policy
- ii. To promote common understanding on the COMESA Biotech and Biosafety policy amongst the stakeholders who will be involved in its implementation at country level
- iii. To strengthen communication capacity of Member States through a half-day communication training focusing on key messages from the policy, language use and media outreach
- iv. To provide an opportunity for Member States to update each other on the development of national biosafety frameworks and how the regional policy can enhance the process

The two-day consultative workshop involved the national biosafety focal points, relevant Country Biosafety Officers and communication officers from appropriate government ministries dealing with biotechnology and biosafety in COMESA member States.

2. COP-MOP7 preparatory meeting

The meeting was organized by International Service for the Acquisition of Agri-biotech Applications (ISAAA) *Afri*Center in collaboration with African Biosafety Network of Expertise (ABNE) to familiarize biotechnology and biosafety stakeholders in Africa with issues to be discussed in the COP-MOP7 in Korea. Deliberations from the meeting contributed to the African position paper presented to the COP-MOP7.