GMASSURE
Assuring Agricultural and Food Safety of Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs) in Southern Africa

PRESS RELEASE

Workshop provides hands-on information on the value of "-omics" to biosafety and food security

Studies undertaken in recent years have demonstrated that there is more variability between conventional crops grown in different conditions than there is between genetically modified (GM) crops and their conventional counterparts.

Although techniques that make use of transcriptomics, proteomics and metabolomics are not recommended for adoption as part of routine biosafety risk assessment, scientists and regulators involved in biosafety issues need to be aware of such techniques and of their potential uses and limitations. Such information forms the basis of an upcoming 12-day workshop to be hosted in Gauteng from 19 to 30 October 2015 by GMASSURE, an action of the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) Science and Technology Programme.

The workshop is aimed at scientists, policy makers and regulators in Southern Africa, with the objective of increasing their knowledge of "-omics" technologies, with a special focus on the application of these technologies to GM crops. It will be presented as a combined training course by the University of Pretoria, the University of Johannesburg, the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) and the Agricultural Research Council (ARC), and the programme will include demonstrations in each of the partner institutions' laboratories.

The implication of natural variation in abundance of transcripts, proteins and metabolites in wild plant populations, as well as between GMOs and their near-isogenic lines, will form a strong focus of the discussions in the workshop. Modules to be presented include gene expression profiling, "next-generation" sequencing, protein profiling techniques and metabolomics analyses of food products. Case studies will also be discussed, with a specific focus on the evaluation of GM crops.

For more information on the workshop, go to www.gmassure.com or contact Dr John Becker at JBecker@csir.co.za or at +27 12 420 6147.

Applications can be made on https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/GMASSURE_omics.