



THE REGULATOR



THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF
NATIONAL BIOSAFETY MANAGEMENT AGENCY



DG/CEO NBMA BRIEFS NEW MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT

**NEWLY APPOINTED DIRECTOR
GENERAL OF NBMA ASSURES
TO BUILD ON LEGACIES;
SOLICITS STAFF SUPPORT**



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**NIGERIAN BIOSAFETY
SYSTEM A REFERENCE
AGENCY FOR THE REST OF
AFRICA – NBMA DG.**

EDITOR'S NOTE

Gloria Ogbaki



Let me appreciate our esteemed readers one more time for their constant patronage. "The Regulator" has remained one of the means through which we reach out to the general public on the activities of the Agency; We will remain committed to this transparency value by keeping the public abreast of our regulatory responsibilities as discharged.

Also, I am much happy to intimate you on the assumption to duty of my new Director General/CEO upon the expiration of tenures of Dr. Rufus Ebegba.

Dr. Agnes, Yemisi Asagbra takes over from Dr. Rufus Ebegba as the Director General/Chief Executive Officer, National Biosafety Management Agency (NBMA). I convey the kind regards of the new Director General/CEO to our esteemed readers; She has promised to sustain the healthy relationship established by her predecessor.

Have a whale of time reading this edition, 2023.



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National Biosafety Management Agency

NEWLY APPOINTED DIRECTOR GENERAL OF NBMA ASSURES TO BUILD ON LEGACIES; SOLICITS STAFF SUPPORT

The newly appointed Director General/CEO National Biosafety Management Agency (NBMA) Dr. Agnes Yemisi Asagbra, has stressed the need to improve on the legacies of the outgoing DG/CEO Dr. Rufus Ebegba. She stated this during the handover ceremony at NBMA Headquarters, Abuja, on 2nd May, 2023. The incoming DG/CEO applauded the outgoing DG for so much he had achieved within the last eight years and promised to sustain those legacies.



Dr. Agnes Yemisi Asagbra said, "I am glad about the level of achievements and works you have done."

"You have truly laid a solid foundation for the protection of human health and environment from adverse impacts of modern biotechnology activities and their products."

"I will consolidate on all you have put in place. Under my watch as DG/CEO NBMA and with the power vested on the Agency, I will resist every action contravening the NBMA Act. Let me make it known that it is only GMOs confirmed safe will be permitted in Nigeria."

"The goal of government establishing NBMA must be achieved; we must put all hands on deck. We will continue to protect the environment and human health while using cutting edge technology to boost the nation's economy."

She expressed belief in the capacity of the staff and promised to continue improving their skills by organizing more trainings and workshops.

"I have no doubt in the competence of the staff of the Agency. Your works speak volumes; the legal instruments, policy and guidelines developed over the last few years of existence reveals the unflinching determination of the management."

Dr. Agnes also solicited support from the staff of the NBMA in order to enable discharge her duties accordingly.

She said "I can't do it on my own, we have to do it together and together, we will take NBMA to greater heights".

She assured the staff that she will always operate an open door policy so that as a team they can lift the Agency to attain greater heights.

The outgoing DG/CEO Dr. Rufus Ebegba in a statement, revealed how fulfilled he was having put in the very best he could to bring to the present state the state of biosafety and biosecurity in Nigeria; am proud of my staff.

"I called them colleagues as every one of them have been instrumental to the development of our national policy, guidelines and all other documents in relation to the protection of human health and environment from adverse impacts of modern biotechnology activities".

The handover ceremony had in attendance the incoming DG/CEO, the outgoing DG/CEO and all heads of departments and units and the newly appointed DG/CEO resumed work immediately by going round the offices to get herself acquainted with staff of the Agency.



NBMA, A CENTRAL POINT IN ACHIEVING FOOD SECURITY IN NIGERIA; MINISTER OF STATE FOR ENVIRONMENT



The Honorable Minister of State for Environment, Dr Isiaq Adekunle has stated that the National Biosafety Management Agency, NBMA is very critical to achieving President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's mandate on Food security.

The Honorable Minister of State, stated this during his working visit to the Agency on Wednesday 11th October, 2023.

Dr. Adekunle stated that "the agency is a central point in ensuring the president achieves his mandate on food security especially in the areas of prevention and mitigation of climate disasters which can damage crops and farms and in turn threaten food security".

Dr. Adekunle also emphasized further that the agency via the activities of regulating modern biotechnology, can help to develop high-yielding crops, and more disease and drought-resistant crops via the regulatory activities carried out by the agency.

Dr Adekunle stated that based on this the Ministry of Environment is willing and ready to work harmoniously with the agency to support the mandate of the President on food security for the benefit of the nation.

The Minister applauded the agency for the great job being done and for being a trailblazer in biosafety activities in Africa, despite the challenges faced by the agency. He also assured the agency of his unflinching support, especially in the aspect of getting a suitable office space and a better work environment for the agency.

He also encouraged the management staff and team to continually be the best in their various job descriptions so that the Agency will continue to be a leading Agency that other African countries can emulate when it comes to biosafety issues.

The Director-general of the NBMA Dr. Agnes Yemisi Asagbra in her remark stated that the Agency has granted approval for the commercial release of three crops such as cotton, maize, and beans (cowpea) which are very critical crops for the economy.

Dr Asagbra who was represented by the Acting Director, Planning Research and Statistics, Mrs Bello Scholastica said that these crops were granted approvals after critically looking at the safety of the crops to humans, animals, plants, and the environment.

She stated that the Agency also looked at the very important role these crops play in the Nigerian economy and the fact that it will help the farmers with increased yield and better productivity while boosting food production and helping to revamp the textile industry.



2023 WORLD BIODIVERSITY DAY: NBMA'S DG/CEO CALLS FOR COLLECTIVE ACTION TO SAFEGUARD THE COUNTRY'S RICH BIODIVERSITY

The Director-General/CEO of the National Biosafety Management Agency (NBMA), Dr. Agnes Asagbra, has called for collective action in order to safeguard Nigeria's rich biodiversity.

The DG/CEO made the call in a press statement issued to commemorate World Biodiversity Day in 2023.

Dr. Asagbra said Nigeria joins the global community to celebrate World Biodiversity Day today, May 22, 2023, with the year's theme "From Agreement to Action: Bring Back Biodiversity."

She highlights the urgent need for concrete steps and collective efforts to restore and protect the rich biodiversity that sustains our planet.

"Biodiversity, the variety of life on Earth, supports the functioning of ecosystems, provides essential resources, and contributes to the well-being of all living beings."

"However, human activities such as deforestation, oil and gas exploration, habitat destruction, pollution, and climate change continue to pose significant threats to biodiversity worldwide."

NBMA also reaffirms its commitment to translating agreements into impactful action.



"We recognize the urgency and interconnectedness of biodiversity conservation and sustainable development, and we stand ready to work collaboratively to rebuild biodiversity and secure a resilient future for all life on Earth." She spoke.



"As an agency that regulates the activities of modern biotechnology in order to contribute to ensuring that the nation's biodiversity is preserved, we reaffirm our commitment to biodiversity conservation and sustainable development."

"We recognize that we are part of the solution and will continue to prioritize actions that protect and restore our planet's biodiversity for the benefit of present and future generations by ensuring that the activities of modern biotechnology are safe for human health, animals, plants, and the environment."



NIGERIAN BIOSAFETY SYSTEM: A REFERENCE AGENCY FOR THE REST OF AFRICA - NBMA DG.



The Director General/CEO National Biosafety Management Agency (NBMA) Dr. Agnes Yemisi Asagbra, has said the African continent will continue to put measures in place to protect human health and the ecosystem from adverse effects of modern biotechnology and its products. DG stated this on receiving a team of biosafety regulator from Burkina Faso.

She also said NBMA will continue to play the leading role in Africa. "The Nigerian biosafety system has been rated high in the international arena and we will ensure the standard is sustained." She stressed on the need for African biosafety systems to synergize in areas of information and capacity sharing; and urged counterparts to seek for any help they may need.

Dr. Moussa Savadogo who led the team from Burkina Faso, expressed ecstasy on the opportunity to understudy the Nigerian Biosafety system. He said that the status of Nigerian Biosafety system is enviable which many other countries would want to emulate. "we came basically to learn from what you do. We want to learn your method. We want our biosafety system to be that strong and enviable like NBMA Nigeria; we will continue to seek assistance from Nigeria any time the need arises."

He said they are here to also learn and discuss how they can work together to deal with the issues of Gene Drive for mosquitos,

Genome editing, and how they can team up in international negotiations they also want to formalize a relationship and partnership between the two countries and systematize meetings such as the study visit, they are currently having.

The Burkina Faso National Regulatory Authority (NBA) will be understudying the NBMA for three days as they learn things about Nigeria's Biosafety system that they hope to take home in order to strengthen the Burkina Faso NBA.

In a paper presentation, Dr. Asagbra emphatically stated that the Agency's responsibility is not to stop Genetically Modified organisms and its products but to ensure that they are safe for animals, human health and the environment. She added that the Agency has done quite a lot in ensuring adequate regulation of the biotechnology sector in Nigeria.

DG noted that the agency's mission is to promote the basic tenants of biosafety as enunciated in the Cartagena protocol on biosafety. "Nigeria is a party to convention on biological diversity and Cartagena protocol on biosafety. We will continue to hold to this belief. The goal is to protect our Nation's biodiversity", she added.



NBMA'S DG/CEO UNDERScores NEED FOR COLLABORATION IN ENSURING SAFE APPLICATION OF MODERN BIOTECH

"The task of safeguarding Nigerians is not one to be done alone, I will need you to stand with us and lend your voice to our campaign for Biosafety and Bio-security in Nigeria. The Agency has and will continue to ensure safety of GMOs to humans, animals and the environment for economic benefit as well as ensure bio-security in Nigeria".

She said there is need to enhance public confidence in Nigeria's biosafety system noting that while Nigeria is being celebrated at the global biosafety space, at home there are still some who are bent on misleading the public with unscientific facts.

"Under my watch therefore as DG/CEO NBMA and with the power vested on the Agency, I will resist every action contravening the NBMA Act 2015 as amended in 2019. Let it be known that it is only GMOs confirmed safe by NBMA, after carrying out risk assessment and risk management that will be permitted in Nigeria. The government's goal of establishing the National Biosafety Management Agency must be achieved, and all hands must be put on deck."

Considering the achievements and strides made by the former DG/CEO, I understand the agitation on the minds of most stakeholders and these will be addressed.

Dr. Agnes Yemisi Asagbra, has noted that there is need for synergy and collaboration between stakeholders involved in the activities of modern biotechnology in order to ensure its safe application for the benefit of Nigerians.

"I am told that AATF understands the importance of Biosafety to the success of their activities and have advocated for a strong biosafety system in Nigeria through their support for the training of lawyers on Biosafety issues, study tours, adherence to biosafety tenet and public awareness/communication programmes. We wish to ask that we continue to enjoy such supports and to further discuss areas within your policy that will enhance our National Biosafety system".

"Indeed, Dr. Rufus Eseoghene Ebeḡba laid a solid foundation in the regulation of Modern Biotechnology in Nigeria and Africa in general, in ensuring an adequate level of protection in the field of safe transfer, handling, and use of genetically modified organisms resulting from modern biotechnology. Under my watch, the Agency will not rest on these laurels or lower the standard already set. No, we will definitely strive to consolidate on all that has been put in place and strengthen the areas of weakness".

Leader of the AATF team and Executive Director of the foundation Dr. Canisius Kanangire congratulated Dr. Asagbra on her appointed and expressed pride over the fact that Nigeria has been the first African country to commercialize BT cowpea and Tela Maize.

He said the "cowpea has revolutionized the industry due to its immense benefits to farmers and Nigerians and this is why other African countries are following after the footsteps of Nigeria as many are now accepting the commercial release of the BT cowpea and Tela maize".

The team presented her with their newly developed strategy which will be used for the next five years.

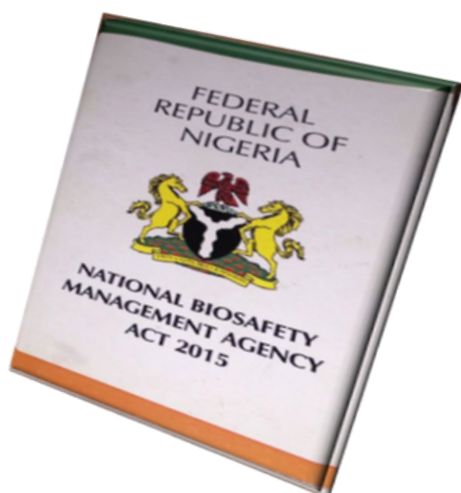


AMENDMENT OF NBMA ACT - A PROACTIVE STEP TO REGULATING EMERGING BIOTECHNOLOGY; SYNTHETIC BIOLOGY AS THE CENTERPIECE. - **ABISABO ADAMU**



The establishment of National Biosafety Management Agency (NBMA) in 2015 was to domesticate the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety (CPB), which is a protocol under the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), and is saddled with responsibility to regulate modern biotechnology activities and its products known as genetically modified organisms (GMOs).

In 2019, the Agency's Act was amended and the scope of the Act enlarged to include regulation of gene drive, gene editing; and synthetic biology, is a field of science that involves redesigning organisms for useful purposes by engineering them to have new abilities that could not exist under normal circumstances. This amendment was due to the fact that not all living organisms developed by synthetic biology or under research and development meet the definition of living modified organisms (LMOs) as provided in the CPB, hence the amendment to keep regulation apace with the global trend in the field of modern biotechnology.



Synthetic biology (SB) has been a topic of discussion under the CBD as well as CPB because of its potential to impact the three objectives of the Convention. It was first discussed under the CBD in 2010 as a potential “new and emerging issue” relating to the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity. In 2014 at Conference of Parties (COP)-12, Parties decided to establish an Ad Hoc Technical Expert Group (AHTEG) on SB. The AHTEG amongst others provided an operational definition of SB which was acknowledged by COP-13 in 2016. The COP-13 (COP/DEC/XIII/17) urged Parties to take a precautionary approach in SB and to further establish risk assessment (RA) and risk management (RM) procedures.

While most living organisms developed by synthetic biology or under research meet the definition of living modified organisms (LMOs) as provided in the CPB, some applications were considered by AHTEG as not being living organisms, e.g. virus-like macromolecular assemblies. However, if they would not fall under the CPB, the CBD and its provision shall apply. At COP-14 in 2018 Parties agreed on the establishment of an effective broad and regular horizon scanning (HS), which is believed will support Parties in keeping track of the fast developments in the area of SB to meet the objectives of CBD, and create effective information sharing on its potential impacts on biodiversity and on possible approaches to perform RA and RM.

It is important to differentiate between HS and RA. At COP-15 in 2022 the discussions on synthetic biology continued and there were debates on whether this technology should be regarded as new and emerging or not. Other Parties were of the view that it was not an urgent matter so should be discussed at COP-16.

However, most Parties strongly felt that it was important for these discussions to continue as the technology is developing at a rapid pace.

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Therefore, Parties relied on the proposal of Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA) -24 which is considered a lynchpin of the process, and agreed that a Multi-disciplinary Ad Hoc Expert Group (MAHTEG) be established to undertake horizon scanning, technology assessment and monitoring to determine the trends in the technology development and the impacts on biodiversity conservation. The CBD Secretariat has recently sent out request for nomination of experts by Parties to be a part of MAHTEG.

Prior to COP-15, the Friends of the Earth (FoE) were concerned about the level of brackets on SB in Target 17. According to them, there was unfortunate language in brackets that will restrict the target only to addressing LMOs, and emphasized that this has to be changed to be coherent with the work program on SB under the CBD that has long encompassed “Organisms, components and products” of SB which is itself defined as further development in modern biotechnology. Hence, to harmonize between SB work program and the language of the Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF), Target 17 should address “impact of biotechnology including SB and other new genetic techniques and their organisms, products and components.”

Different countries have different approaches to the regulation of SB. The focus of EU regulation is more on the process of genetic modification used to make a product and whether or not the GMOs are released to the environment.



In EU, legislation on Risk assessment of SB research is covered by two EU GMO directives (other regulations cover marketing of products such as medicines, cosmetics and chemicals). The Contained Use Directive (2009/41/EC) which covers contained activities, such as those carried out in a laboratory and the Deliberate Release Directive (2001/18/EC) which covers the release of a GMO to the environment.

In the USA and Canada, regulation focuses on the novelty of the traits of the product itself (trait-based, regulation. The National Research Council of the U.S. A. concluded that synthetic biology should not be treated as a special genetic-engineering technique and does not create unique hazards as compared to other methods of genetic modification.

The UK is perhaps the most active country in synthetic biology. UK government commissioned the production of a national synthetic biology roadmap already in 2011, this was the first national roadmap by any country and any organization.

While the discussion is still ongoing, Nigeria is working on developing draft guidelines for the regulation of SB based on the available knowledge and will be reviewed time to time as new information avails.

The first products from synthetic biology are beginning to reach the market. They include the anti-malarial drug artemisinin, the flavoring vanillin and other applications that may have a range of potential benefits such as pollution control, bioremediation, and reducing the dependence on non-renewable resources. Such products may fall within the scope of existing regulations and risk assessment frameworks for genetically modified organisms (GMOs), food, chemical and medicines.

However, there is debate as to whether existing regulations will be appropriate for potential future applications in this rapidly emerging field. Also, synthetic biology raises a number of potential environmental, ethical, legal and societal issues. Although public awareness of synthetic biology is not widespread, a UK public dialogue in 2010 highlighted that those consulted were not opposed to synthetic biology as such, but wanted to know more about the purpose and implications of the technology.

NBMA’S DG/CEO MAKES ROUNDS OF WORKING VISITS TO VARIOUS STAKE HOLDERS



The Director-General/CEO of the National Biosafety Management Agency Dr. Agnes Yemisi Asagbra started her rounds of working visits to various stakeholders of the Agency, with visits to the National Biotechnology Development Agency (NABDA) and the Sheda Science and technology complex where she met with their DG/CEOs.

The essence of the visits was to formally introduce the new DG/CEO of the NBMA so she can familiarize herself with the stakeholders of the Agency.



The Director-General/CEO of the National Biosafety Management Agency, Dr Agnes Yemisi Asagbra also visited the Agricultural Research Council of Nigeria (ARCN), where she met with the executive secretary of the council Prof Garba Sharubutu.

Dr. Asagbra was taken around the facilities of the council including the television and radio stations owned by the council.

The essence of the visit was to familiarize herself with the workings of the council.



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NBMA CAUTIONS NIGERIANS OVER ANTHRAX OUTBREAK

The National Biosafety Management Agency (NBMA) is urging Nigerians to exercise caution following the recent outbreak of anthrax, a potentially fatal disease that can be contracted from infected animals or through contaminated products.

The Director-General/CEO of NBMA, Dr Agnes Yemisi Asagbra who made the call in a press statement made available to journalists on Tuesday 13th June, 2023 said anthrax is a serious infectious disease caused by a spore-forming bacterium which mainly affects livestock particularly cattle, sheep and goats.

She said that humans can become infected through contact with an infected animal or by inhaling spores and called on Nigerians to be cautious as cases of human transmission have been reported in Ghana. "The sickness, is a zoonotic disease caused by germs that may spread from animals to humans."



Dr. Asagbra urged the general public to avoid direct contact with sick or dead animals especially those exhibiting symptoms associated with anthrax and urged farmers, herders, and individuals involved in animal husbandry to take extra care and seek veterinary assistance if they suspect any signs of illness in their livestock.

If anthrax is not identified and treated promptly, it can cause pneumonia, serious lung issues, breathing difficulties, shock, and death. Symptoms of anthrax include flu-like symptoms like coughing, fever, and muscular aches.

She said proper hygiene practices should be followed when handling and processing animal products. "It is recommended to wear protective clothing, such as gloves, when handling raw animal hides. Thoroughly wash hands and equipment with soap and water after contact with animal products."

The DG/CEO said anthrax can survive in improperly processed animal products and urged the public to ensure that animal products are thoroughly cooked at high temperatures to eliminate any potential bacteria. "We also implore all stakeholders in the food and agricultural industry to prioritize safety measures and adhere to biosafety regulations in order to safeguard the health of our citizens." Dr. Asagbra said the Agency remains committed to working with relevant stakeholders to ensure the safety and well-being of all Nigerians and urged the public to remain vigilant and report any suspected cases of anthrax or contaminated animal products to the nearest medical center. "It is crucial for all Nigerians to remain calm but vigilant."

By adhering to these precautionary measures, we can collectively mitigate the risks associated with the anthrax outbreak and protect both animal and human health."

ACCOUNTING FOR CLIMATE CHANGE METRICS IN BIOSAFETY - ADANNA MGBOJIKWE-LOTO



Nelson Mandela once said, ***“One cannot be prepared for something, while secretly believing it will not happen”***. Climate change is real. Across the world and even here in Nigeria We face daily reminders that our climate is changing either from the reports across the globe or from physical experiences in our immediate environment. The excessive heat arising from underserving high temperatures to the difference in the intensity of the current rainy season compared to years before are clear experiences Nigerians can easily attest to. In its 2023 Seasonal Climate Prediction (SCP), the Nigerian Meteorological Agency (NiMet) predicted earlier rainfall this year compared to previous years with expected flooding in flood-prone areas. We sometimes view Climate Change as an abstract issue but unfortunately, it is a reality that we face daily.

To bring this reality even closer to home, let's explore some common occurrences. Suppose you reside in our nation's capital and use a weather forecast app, chances are that you have received predictions of high ultraviolet (UV) radiation usually between the hours of 1 pm - 3 pm on sunny afternoons. While it has some benefits including the creation of Vitamin D, overexposure can increase the risks to human health such as sunburn, skin ageing, eye diseases and skin cancer.

Modern and emerging agricultural biotechnologies attempt to increase adaptation to the changes in our climate and reduce adverse impacts on our environment by modifying crops to express traits such as drought tolerance, water efficiency, improved productivity and herbicide tolerance.

These traits with proper utilization can contribute to, not just solving the looming hunger crises and ensuring food security but improving the resilience of humanity in the face of an ever-changing climate.

These biotechnologies can be seen as ways to achieve some sustainable development goals (SDGs) set forth by the United Nations, especially in the areas of food security (ending hunger) and mitigating the effects of climate change as per goals 2 and 13 of the UN SDGs respectively.

Goal 2 - Zero Hunger - aims to end hunger; achieve food security and improved nutrition; and promote sustainable agriculture. Agricultural biotechnology contributes to ensuring sustainable food production systems when combined with resilient agricultural practices that increase productivity and production. These can lead to sustained food security and enhanced nutrition, especially on the African continent.

Goal 13 - Climate Action - speaks to taking urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts. Agricultural biotechnologies are keying into strengthening resilience and adaptive capacity to climate-related hazards and natural disasters. This can result in maintained ecosystems, and strengthened capacity for adaptation to drought, flooding and other disasters, including progressively improving land and soil quality partly due to the reduction in the use of herbicides.



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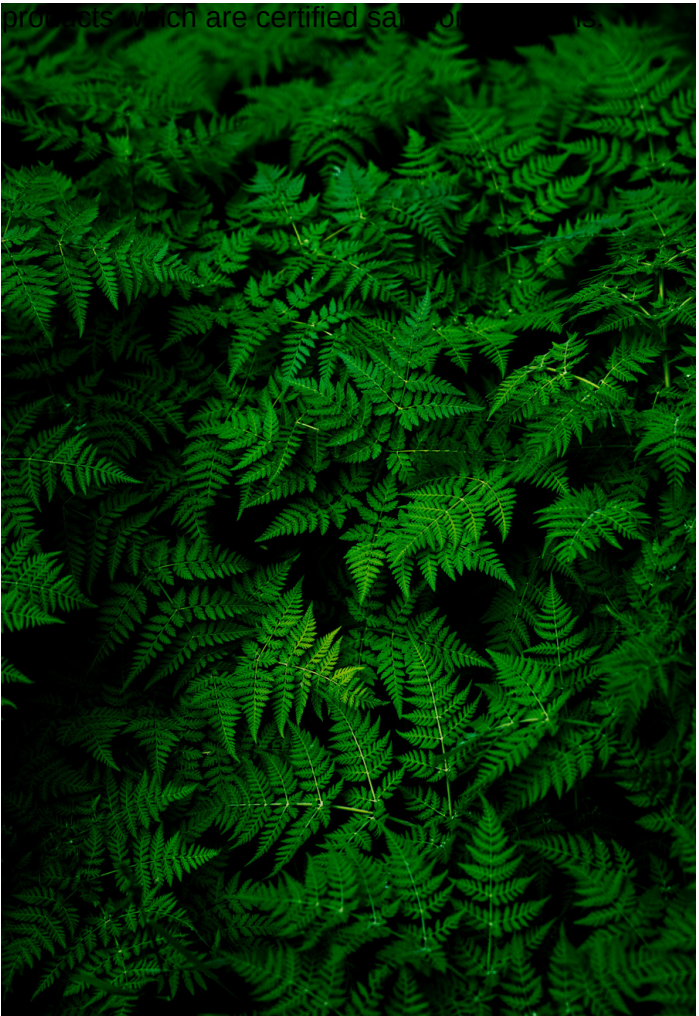
It has been said that nothing is 100% safe, new technologies may inevitably pose some risks as well — perhaps to human health or to the environment that sustains human life. Biosafety regulations, therefore, act as a ‘check and balance’ for these technologies. It sets forth measures to protect the environment and human health from the possible adverse effects of modern and emerging biotechnologies and their products. It ensures that these biotechnologies do as they have promised without negatively impacting human or animal health or the environment while ensuring the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, and the fair and equitable sharing of benefits



While measures to account for the impact of products of modern biotechnology are detailed in risk assessments - covering plant information (nutritional composition, toxicity, allergenicity etc), genetic modification, interactions of the modified plant with the receiving environment and socio-economic considerations - there is a need to account for impacts on the environment in terms of contributions to climate action.

It is essential that biosafety risk assessments involve metrics that also account for climate change, including a projected reduction in greenhouse gas emissions and water consumption, and the potential to survive flooding, depending on the purpose of genetic modification. Having figures and intentional metrics in biosafety risk assessments will ensure the integration of climate change measures into national policies, strategies and planning, which is a crucial target for Goal 13.

This measure of systemic accountability will allow Nigeria to show transparency in the implementation of climate action, give deeper credibility to the impact of biotechnology on the environment and allow for greater accountability in the genetically modified



DG NBMA MEETS WITH SUPERSTORE OPERATORS IN ABUJA; CAUTIONS AGAINST STOCKING UN-APPROVED GM PRODUCTS

The Director-General/Chief Executive Officer of the National Biosafety Management Agency (NBMA), Dr Agnes Yemisi Asagbra has cautioned superstores operators against the stocking of unapproved Genetically modified products on their selves.

The DG/CEO who said this, during a meeting with superstore operators in Abuja stated that the Agency will not hesitate to sanction any super store who violates the act as there are set down sanctions for any individual or organization found to have contravened the provisions of the NBMA 2015 as amended."

She said "this meeting is also very important as it serves as an opportunity for me to restate the agency's mandate of regulating genetically modified products in the country.



"In a world driven by innovation and progress, genetically modified products have become an integral part of our global food supply chain. As representatives of superstores, you play a crucial role in ensuring that the products on your shelves meet the highest standards of safety, sustainability, and ethical sourcing. Today, I would like to shed light on the importance of biosafety in the importation of genetically modified products and how we can work together to navigate this landscape responsibly."

"Biosafety is not merely a regulatory hurdle; it is a commitment to the well-being of our citizens and the environment. Genetically modified products have the potential to address global challenges such as food security, crop resilience, and nutritional enhancement. However, it is our collective responsibility to ensure that these advancements are harnessed safely and responsibly."

"The NBMA Act 2015 as amended under section 22 states that "no person, institution or body shall import, export, transit, carry out the contained use, confined field trial, multi-locational trial without the approval or permit of the Agency". Part 11, Section 35 to Section 40 of the Act also prescribes penalties for contravention of the law. These penalties include fines and jail terms or both for any person or body that is found wanting. Hence I am here to tell you today that ignorance of the law is no excuse and the Agency will not hesitate to wield the big stick of penalties against any establishment that contravenes the law."

"The Act under section 39 also empowers the agency to inspect, monitor and enforce its mandate and I will advise you all to get a copy of the act which is available on our website to acquaint yourselves with its provisions so no one is found wanting."

"NBMA has established robust regulations to govern the importation and handling of genetically modified products. These regulations are not meant to stifle progress but rather to create a framework that fosters responsible innovation. By adhering to these guidelines, we can guarantee the safety of our citizens and the environment while embracing the benefits that biotechnology brings."

"I want to emphasize the importance of transparency in the supply chain and that is why I have decided to meet with you all today. Superstores, as key stakeholders, must maintain open lines of communication with suppliers and consumers. Providing accurate information about the origin, composition, and safety assessments of genetically modified products empowers consumers to make informed choices and builds trust in our shared commitment to biosafety".

She added that in today's interconnected world, collaboration is the cornerstone of progress. "The National Biosafety Management Agency is here to work hand-in-hand with superstores, providing support, guidance, and expertise to ensure that the importation of genetically modified products aligns with the highest standards of biosafety". The superstore operators who were present at the meeting pledged to continue to abide by the regulation guiding importation of GM products and promised to continue to collaborate with the Agency to ensure that only approved GM products are stocked for the benefits of Nigerians.

BIOSECURITY: AN INTEGRAL PART IN SAFEGUARDING THE NATION - MINISTER OF STATE FOR ENVIRONMENT



The Honourable Minister of State, Federal Ministry of Environment, Dr Iziaq Adekunle Salako has stated that bio-risk management is important to safeguarding and protecting the safety of the environment and human health, and the nation at large.

He stated this at the opening remarks of a two-day Executive Leadership Training on Bio-risk Management, organized by the National Biosafety Management Agency (NBMA) in collaboration with the Health Security Partnership (HSP) on the 6th of November, 2023, in Abuja.

The honorable minister of state further explained that “the training is crucial and important at this time, especially as this current administration holds biosecurity integral and topmost part of safety for this nation”.

“This training is apt as it is the responsibility of all leaders to ensure we are well prepared to resolve challenges of bio-risk management in recent times and this training will help to ensure we collaborate to enhance the security of our nation which is one major focus of NBMA”.

The Director General /CEO of the National Biosafety Management Agency Biosafety Management Agency, Dr. Agnes Yemisi Asagbra, explained that the agency is responsible for ensuring that biosafety and biosecurity measures are implemented to ensure the safety of human health, the environment, and the nation at large.

Dr. Asagbra emphasized that “bio-risk management transcends beyond academic and theoretical exercise, but is imperative to our nation with profound implications for the safety of our environment, human health, and national security.

“In today’s dynamic and ever-changing landscape, it is important we respond effectively to bio-risks to define our resilience and preparedness”.

Dr. Asagbra highlighted that the core objective of the training is to understand the impact bio-risks have on our ecosystems, economies, and the general well-being of the nation.

“Therefore, this training would empower leaders to understand the latest scientific advancements and also learn best practices, and explore innovative solutions that would strengthen and safeguard our environment, human health, and the well-being of the nation”.

The program Manager from Health Security Partners, Rebecca Sherrod, commended the expertise of the National Biosafety Management and all stakeholders and also enjoined everyone to become an ambassador of biosecurity.

Other stakeholders and professionals assured that the curriculum and aspects of biosafety and biosecurity would be implemented in research activities and institutions.

The two-day training program has in attendance, representatives from the office of the National Security Adviser, research institutes, academia and stakeholders in the biosafety/biosecurity sector in the country.



NBMA'S DG/CEO STATES THE NEED FOR PROACTIVE COLLABORATION BETWEEN NBMA AND NABDA



The Director General/Chief Executive Officer of the National Biosafety Management Agency Dr. Agnes Yemisi Asagbra has said that there is need for proactive collaboration between the Agency and the National Biotechnology Development Agency (NABDA) in other to ensure that modern biotech is safely deployed for the benefit of Nigerians.

The DG/CEO said this when she received the DG/CEO of NABDA Abdullahi Mustapha and his team in her office today.

She said modern biotech activities must be carried out in a manner that will not cause harm to humans, animals and the environment.

The DG/CEO of NABDA said the essence of the visit was to strengthen the collaboration between both Agencies in other to ensure that Nigeria is food secured and environmentally safe.



NIGERIAN CUSTOMS INTEGRATES NBMA INTO ITS SINGLE WINDOW INFORMATION SYSTEM

The National Biosafety Management Agency has been integrated into the Nigeria Integrated Customs Information System II (NICIS II).

This was made known today when the DG/CEO of NBMA Dr Agnes Yemisi Asagbra and her management team paid a visit to the Acting Comptroller General of Nigerian Customs Service (NCS), Adewale Adeniyi.

The essence of the integration is to ensure that goods are properly monitored to so that no GM seed or grain is imported or exported without the approval of the Agency.

This integration is part of the collaborative efforts between the NBMA and NCS and it is expected that the integration will ensure compliance with regulations while expediting the flow of legitimate goods in the country.



DG/CEO NBMA said the presence of Nigeria Customs at the ports of entry is significant in achieving the mandate of NBMA. The Director General Dr. Agnes, Yemisi Asagbra, DG said "in retrospect, NBMA and Customs collaboration yielded positive results and we want this to continue. There is a need to sustain our synergy. Customs presence at borders means so much in realizing our mandate".

The use of technology to improve agricultural productivity must be done in such a way that it does not pose threat to human health and the environment, DG added.

NBMA WOULD THRIVE ON EXCELLENCE AND SAFE CUTTING EDGE TECHNOLOGIES - DG/CEO NBMA



The Director General/CEO of National Biosafety Management Agency (NBMA), Dr Agnes Yemisi Asagbra has reassured the public of her commitment in ensuring that the agency strives to achieve excellence in biosafety measures and biotechnology regulations in Nigeria. She stated this during a press briefing held today 26th July, 2023, in her office.

Dr. Asagbra recognized and commended the efforts of the preceding DG of the agency, in her words she stated "I would like to take a moment to recognize the commendable efforts of my predecessor and the dedicated team at the National Biosafety Management Agency, their commitment to safeguarding our nation's biodiversity and ensuring the safe use of modern biotechnology has laid a strong foundation upon which we shall build".

The Director General further explained that the tenets of her leadership would be focused on capacity building, enhancing biosafety standards, transparency and public engagement, emerging technologies, as well as collaboration and partnerships.

She further emphasized that her leadership would ensure the agency is proactive in adopting safe cutting edge technologies.

Dr. Asagbra, also explained the important role and measures the agency would put in place to ensure biosecurity in order to safeguard against bioweapons in the country.

NBMA'S DG/CEO ATTENDED THE 35TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF BIOTECHNOLOGY SOCIETY OF NIGERIA

The DG/CEO of NBMA Dr Agnes Yemisi Asagbra attended the 35th annual conference of the Biotechnology Society of Nigeria, where she gave a paper presentation on "Bio-innovation for food availability and safety".

She said the NBMA remains formidable in achieving its mandate.



NBMA'S DG/CEO ATTENDED THE AFRICAN BIENNIAL BIOSCIENCE COMMUNICATION #ABBC2023 PROGRAMME: EVOLUTION OF GENETIC IMPROVEMENT TOOLS IN AGRICULTURE: IS COMMUNICATION MATCHING UP?

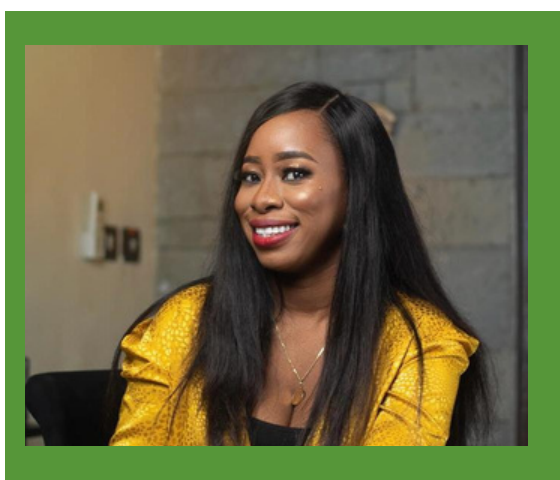
The DG/CEO of National Biosafety Management Agency Dr Agnes Yemisi Asagbra is attending the African Biennial Bioscience Communication #ABBC2023 programme with the theme, "Evolution of Genetic Improvement Tools in Agriculture: is Communication matching up? The conference is looking new communication tools with a goal to align Communication approaches with advancements in new breeding tool for enhancing contribution to sustainable food systems and planetary earth. Dr. Asagbra is also attending the Program for Biosafety Systems (PBS) annual meeting where she made a presentation on the "Regulators Perspective: Proud moments, achievements and future challenges". She talked about the many progress the NBMA has made in ensuring that the Nigerian Biosafety System remains one to be reckoned with globally.

MEET OUR STAFF



Aligwekwe Blessing Uluma is an Assistant Director Environmental Biosafety and General Release with the National Biosafety Management Agency

She bagged a BSc Botany from Michael Okpara University of Agriculture Umahia Abia state in the year 2003 and an MSc in Managing the Environment (pathway; GM Crop Risk Assessment from Aberystwyth University, Aberystwyth United Kingdom 2013. She is an indigene of Imo State from Ikedura Local Government Area of the State. She was born on the 6th of July. She is happily married with kids and loves reading and researching.



Onodjaike Ese is an Administrative officer 1 with the National Biosafety Management Agency.

She hails from Ughehlli North Local Government area of Delta State; she was born on the 9th September

She holds a BSc Sociology from the Ahmadu Bello University Zaria in the year 2008, she loves travelling and cooking.



Osegbe Isichei Ignatius is the Liaison officer for the Zonal and State offices of the National Biosafety Management Agency.

He holds a BSc Cell Biology and Genetics from the University of Lagos in the year 2009

He is an Indigene of Aniocha North Local Government of Delta State

He was born on the 2nd of march, He is happily married with kids he loves reading and jogging.



Edache Isaiah is an Information and Communication Officer 1 with the National Biosafety Management Agency (NBMA).

He holds a B.Sc Mass Communication from Benue state University, Makurdi, Benue state; M.Sc Public Relations (in view) from Nasarawa state university.

He hails from Obu-Otukpa in Ogbadibo Local Government Area of Benue State.



THE FOLLOWING PAGES MARK THE ERSTWHILE DIRECTOR GENERAL, DR EBEGBA RUFUS' LAST MOMENTS IN OFFICE



NBMA RESTATES READINESS TO COLLABORATE WITH ARGENTINE EMBASSY

The Director General/ Chief Executive officer of the National Biosafety management Agency (NBMA) Dr. Rufus Eseoghene Ebegba has said that the Agency is ready to collaborate with the Argentine Embassy in order to achieve its mandate. Dr. Rufus Ebegba said this when he received a team from the Argentine Embassy who pay a visit to his office on the 14/03/2023. Dr Ebegba gave a brief on the mandate of the Agency he said the Agency's responsibility is to ensure that modern biotechnology and it's products known as genetically modified organisms are done in a way that it does not pose any harm to human and the environment and should also have economic benefit. "The Agency since it's establishment was able to develop regulatory instruments and policies to protect human health and the environment from adverse effects of modern biotechnology." "The essence is to ensure that the application of modern biotechnology and it's products are safe and to put in place biosecurity measures so that harmful biological Agents are properly curtail." He said. Mr Nicholas Perazzo who led the team expressed his appreciation for the warm welcome and asked for a strong co-operation and synergy because it will enable so many things to happen and help in the economic growth of the country.



NBMA READY AND PREPARED TO REGULATE GENOME EDITED PRODUCTS



The Director-General/Chief Executive Officer of the National Biosafety Management Agency Dr. Rufus Ebegba has said that NBMA is ready and prepared to regulate genome edited products as measures have been put in place to ensure proper regulation of the product.

Dr. Rufus Eseoghene Ebegba made the statement while presenting a paper on "Regulatory pathway for GEd product development in Nigeria", during a Workshop for chief executives and experts in research and academic institutions on advancing Genome editing research in Nigeria organized by the African Union Development Agency (AUDA-NEPAD)'s center of excellence on Science Technology and Innovation.

The workshop is aimed to provide a high-level platform which will connect and support in-country expert communities towards offering integrated technical advisory services in Genome editing among other objectives.

MEWAR INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY SEEKS SYNERGY WITH NBMA

The Director-General/Chief Executive Officer of the National Biosafety Management Agency (NBMA), Dr. Rufus Ebegba, has said that the Agency is poised to collaborate with institutions of learning in order to achieve its mandate.

Dr. Ebegba said this, when he received a team from the Mewar International University who came on a courtesy call to his office today (18 Jan 2023).

Dr. Ebegba said the NBMA will collaborate with Mewar International University in areas of biosafety and biosecurity and noted that a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) will help the Agency in its bid to strengthen Nigeria Biosafety system.

The DG/CEO stated that NBMA has memoranda of understanding with other universities and the collaborations have been yielding positive results. He also said, NBMA over the years has achieved a lot in the area of collaborations and "we are looking forward to signing MOU with your University to work together." Also, many students from across the country have been to the agency for their internships and it will continue to provide the same opportunity, DG added.

Dr. Ebegba said the Nigerian Biosafety system is one of the best in Africa and "we have a state-of-the-art GM laboratory where we subject GM suspects to analysis." He said the agency since establishment was able to develop regulatory instruments and policies to protect human health and the environment from adverse effects of modern biotechnology.



Professor Mahtab Adam, Director Academics and Planning, Mewar International University, who led the team, said it is important to sign MOU with NBMA to collaborate on Biosafety matters. He said the issue of modern biotechnology and biosafety in modern times especially when agricultural sector is facing challenges resulting from climate change and others, demand smart ways to feed the ever-growing world population.

He stated that the university will provide the needed capacities for effective collaboration to ensure the goal of biosafety is achieved.

The essence of the visit was to seek for areas of collaboration on issues of Biosafety and Biosecurity in Nigeria.



NBMA REVIEWS SOME REGULATORY INSTRUMENTS

The National Biosafety Management Agency (NBMA), has begun the review of its regulatory instruments that have been developed since 2015 till date.

The Director General/Chief Executive Officer of NBMA, Dr. Rufus Ebegba while speaking during one of the internal review-meeting held today (6th February, 2023), said the Agency is subjecting its regulatory instruments and guidelines to internal review noting that it will be a continuous process that would include all the developed guidelines and instruments since 2015.

He stated that the aim was to ensure improvement of all the documents where necessary. 'I understand that these documents went through rigorous processes of development in the past years. Let me also recognize all efforts geared towards the present taste of these documents by our stakeholders. However, we are looking at the documents holistically to see if there was any need to correct any aspect of them'.

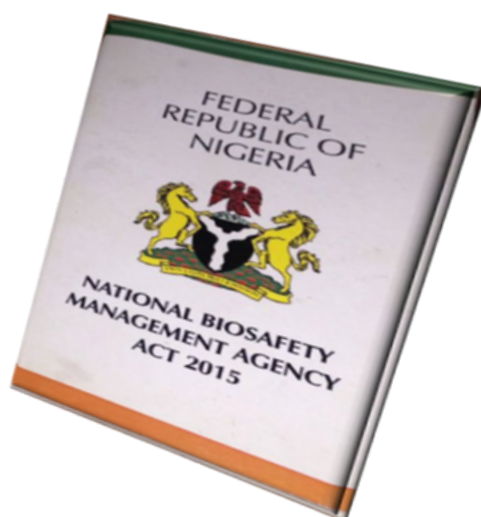
"The essence of these internal review series is to ensure that the documents are in tandem with international norms due to the increase in scientific knowledge. The internal reviews of the Agency's guidelines and application forms are all part of efforts to ensure that the Nigerian Biosafety system is strengthened, is up to standard and is up to date with international best practices."



ABOUT NBMA

INCEPTION OF NBMA

The National Biosafety Management Agency (NBMA) was established by the NBMA ACT 2015. The Act came into force on the 18th of April 2015 with the appointment of Dr. Rufus Ebegba as the pioneer Director-General/Chief Executive Officer of the Agency.



THE AMENDMENT OF THE NBMA ACT, 2015

In August, 2019, President Muhammadu Buhari assented to a bill forwarded by the 8th National Assembly for the Amendment of the NBMA ACT 2015.

This is to include the regulation of Emerging Modern Biotechnology such as Gene Editing, Gene drive, Synthetic biology, Biosecurity etc in Nigeria.



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WE ARE PROFESSIONAL
WE ARE IMPRESSIVELY LARGE
WE ARE CAPABLE

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