

- **Mr. Representative of the Senior Minister from the Ministry of Agriculture, Hydraulics and Fishing Resources**
- **Mr. Chargé d’Affaires of the Embassy of the United States in Burkina Faso**
- **Participants in the expert consultation on biotechnology applications in cotton**
- **Ladies and Gentlemen,**

I would first like to welcome to Burkina Faso the experts and participants in this conference, which was organized by the International Cotton Advisory Committee (ICAC) in cooperation with the US Agency for International Development (USAID), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), and the Common Fund for Commodities (CFC).

Next I would like to thank the organizers of this consultation for having chosen Burkina Faso as the host of this important meeting.

The topic of this conference, which is **“Exchanging information on the advantages and potential risks related to the use of transgenic insect-resistant cotton by small cotton producers in western African countries,”** is of interest to my country.

Indeed, as you know, Burkina Faso has been experimenting with genetically modified cotton for five years now.

The purpose of this experimentation is to scientifically establish the environmental and socioeconomic bases for safe, profitable use of Bt technology. So this is an opportunity for us to benefit from the experience of those who are already using genetically modified cotton on a large scale, such as South Africa, India, the United States, Argentina, China, Mexico, Australia and Brazil. In 2006, the total area of Bt cotton grown in these countries was 13.4 million hectares.

The objectives of this conference we are holding today in Ouagadougou are the following.

- 1 Inform western African producers and make them aware of the advantages of Bt cotton by offering them a true framework for open, frank discussion of transgenic cotton.
- 2 Gain better mastery of biosecurity regulations in the sub-region's countries so transgenic cotton can be responsibly and effectively monitored.
- 3 Gain better knowledge of patents and intellectual property law and suggest practical ways and means for the countries to negotiate for access and use of the genes that are exclusive property so they can be incorporated into local varieties of cotton that are well adapted and perfected by the various countries' national agronomic research departments.

- 4 Analyze the key elements for successful implementation of a national commercial production program for transgenic cotton in developing countries.
- 5 Identify the main factors for success in commercializing biotechnology products in South Africa, as a model of African experience.
- 6 Examine the current state of research on transgenic cotton in western Africa and identify the major constraints and challenges that must be faced in order for the countries to gain access to this technology for the benefit of cotton producers.
- 7 Examine the commercial implications of transgenic cotton on the world market.

Burkina Faso is greatly interested in the results you are expecting from your work, namely:

- 1 A better knowledge of the main factors and conditions required for the successful evaluation, deployment and adoption of transgenic cotton technology;
- 2 A good evaluation of the potential risks and opportunities associated with transgenic cotton;

- 3 A framework or “road map” for the commercial use of transgenic cotton technology in developing countries of western Africa.

Before I finish, I would like once again to thank the conference organizers for honoring my country by selecting it as the host for this important conference.

Thank you.