
Abstract No. 50

PaperTitle **Public Perceptions of Biotechnology and an Evaluation of the Incidence of Transgenic Sequences in Processed Foods in Botswana**

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ABSTRACT

The utilization of biotechnology to enhance the quality and quantity of food(s) produced from living organisms holds significant promise for the alleviation of hunger and malnutrition, and reduction of food insecurity in developing countries such as Botswana. Widespread, documented skepticism about the potential risks of genetically modified organisms and their products can affect biotechnology's contribution to food security. A survey has been conducted in Botswana to record and objectively assess public knowledge, perception and attitudes towards biotechnology and genetically modified foods (GM foods) in particular. A total of 977 individuals in twelve population centers around Botswana answered a questionnaire that interrogated issues ranging from basic scientific knowledge about genes and genetic engineering to perceptions and attitudes towards public policy interventions on GM food labeling and regulatory oversight.

The results of the survey were used to form a baseline for future studies and to inform the choice of DNA-based analytical services at the National Food Technology Research Centre (NFTRC). The absence of labeling requirements for GM Foods in Botswana has led to a general assumption that GM foods are not present on the Botswana market. A survey of the incidence transgenic sequences in processed Soy and Maize/corn- based food products was conducted on samples collected in Gaborone and Kanye, Botswana. The samples collected were analyzed for the presence or absence of the 35S promoter and NOS terminator gene sequences characteristic of genetic modification and present in all GM plant material.