

GMO POLICY

Position of research groups at Stellenbosch University on biotechnological research related to the production and processing of foodstuff

1. DEFINITIONS

- 1.1 Genetic modification (GM): The development of an organism through the transformation with foreign or altered molecules of DNA.
- 1.2 Genetically modified organism (GMO): Any organism obtained through the application of genetic modification.

2. BIOTECHNOLOGICAL RESEARCH AT STELENBOSCH UNIVERSITY

2.1 Objectives

Objectives of biotechnological research conducted at the University of Stellenbosch include:

- the establishment and maintenance of an internationally competitive knowledge base, both through research and teaching
- the generation of new knowledge through research on fundamental biological processes
- the application of newly gained knowledge, self-generated or foreign, to the benefit of the South African industry and the population at large.

Meeting these objectives will allow South Africa to benefit from applications arising from the use of new technologies.

2.2 Expected applications

Benefits for the agricultural and industrial sectors expected to derive from the research include:

- new varieties of organisms to facilitate and improve agricultural performance (yield, quality, resistance and new products), or processing properties (fermentation, extraction, flavour, etc)
- reduced impact of agricultural practice and industry on the environment through the reduced use of fertilisers, pesticides and herbicides, and improved processing efficiencies
- healthier alternatives to current foodstuff through the production of increased amounts of beneficial substances, or novel substances.

2.3 Technologies

The University strives to use the best available technology to achieve the specific aims of each research project. These include:

- traditional technologies, such as selection of natural plant varieties or microbiological strains and the selective breeding of plants or animals
- genetic modification technologies, when traditional technologies have failed or are unsuitable to achieve a specific aim. Specifically, these technologies refer to:
 - the isolation (cloning) of genetic material of interest from donor organisms
 - the introduction of this material in organisms of agricultural or industrial importance, be they microorganisms, plants or animals
 - the *in vitro* selection, propagation, evaluation and maintenance of the genetically modified organism.

3. COMPLIANCE WITH REGULATIONS AND GUIDELINES

- The University will comply with all regulations and guidelines regarding the execution of genetic modifications as specified in Act 15 of 1997 (Genetically Modified Organism Act) of the Department of Agriculture.

- The University will cooperate with the South African Committee for Genetic Experimentation (SAGENE), which acts as the national advisory body on Genetically modified organisms, and comply with all the Guidelines and Procedures as suggested by the committee.
- The University will comply with any other regulation, international trade agreement or international industrial guidelines that might be relevant to specific projects, industries or research with specific groups of organisms.

4. INFORMATION POLICY AND THE FURTHERING OF PUBLIC AWARENESS

- All research at the University will be conducted as openly and transparently as possible, and in a way not to reduce the potential impact of scientific breakthroughs or damage prospects for patent applications.
- All interested persons or institutions will be granted access to research facilities on request.
- All projects and their aims will be made public through regular public presentations, scientific communications and the compiling of posters and brochures.
- Relevant information will be available on the University web sites.
- Important scientific results will be made public through information of the press or audiovisual media.