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**Attention: The News Editor**

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### **Stakeholder Workshop on Biosafety endorses GMO Regulations**

The National Commission on Research Science and Technology (NCRST) recently held a final stakeholder workshop to conclude regulations to the Biosafety Act, 2006 (Act no 7 of 2006). The regulations are expected to be submitted for gazetting next month, and once approved, they will establish a robust system of control for experimenting with and cultivating Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs), and also ensure that all GMO-contained food is labelled in a clear manner that indicated that it contains GMO.

GMO foods are made through modern biotechnology by altering the DNA of food plants to improve their qualities. The improved qualities include making them more resistant to pests and plant diseases, and making them cope better in droughts. This allows farmers to produce higher crop yields. The same technology has been used for decades to produce insulin for people living diabetes.

The implementation of the Biosafety Act was only instituted since the establishment of NCRST who has now prioritised the development of a national Biosafety framework. This exercise included the drafting of regulations, which was done through extensive stakeholder consultations to ensure that the concerns of all affected parties are taken into consideration. The regulations have also been benchmarked with international best practices to ensure compliance with the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety, to which Namibia is a signatory.

The final workshop was well attended by stakeholders ranging from farmers, agro-processors and producers, technical experts from government ministries who will be involved in the implementation of the Biosafety legal framework, as well as consumer groups and other affected associations.

This wide range of stakeholders came to a consensus and supported the regulations and once their comments and suggestions are incorporated, with the legal and institutional frameworks in place, a robust regulatory regime for GMOs is soon to be implemented. Consumers will now have a choice to select GM-containing food or GM-free food. In the long run, our reliance on food imports will be reduced as local farmers may now endeavour into GM technology for crop improvement.

**Ends:**

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