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BACKGROUNDER: ABS PROJECT'S PERMIT APPLICATION IN SOUTH AFRICA

Over the past few months the ABS project has had some difficulties in the application for a permit for contained use of ABS#1 sorghum. The first version of the application was returned to the applicant (CSIR) because it was deemed incomplete by the authorities. Regulators routinely demand additional information where this is necessary.

The purpose of the ABS project is to develop sorghum with improved food quality. This project is undertaken as part of the worldwide effort to improve the nutritional status of the rural poor through biofortification (enrichment of food by biological means) of staple food crops. This is just one of the many research projects currently underway to harness the promise of gene technology to serve the poorest in the developing world.

The ABS project has continued to engage regulatory authorities in South Africa, supplying them with whatever information they requested. Based on the last engagement, a revised and updated application was prepared for the authorities. This type of situation is not uncommon when, as is the case here, the application is about a crop which has not previously been reviewed by the authorities, and both the applicant and the authorities need to evaluate exactly which information is required for a solid safety assessment and informed decision.

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Issued by ABS Project's Communication Department

Daniel Kamanga, Tel +27 11 781 4449 (fixed line); +27 82 787 4799 (mobile)

Email: dkamanga@ahbfi.org

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About the ABS Project:

The ABS Project is funded by a grant from the Grand Challenges in Global Health Initiative, with a budget of \$20 million over five years.

The Grand Challenges initiative was launched by the Gates Foundation in 2003, in partnership with the National Institutes of Health, to help apply innovation in science and technology to the greatest health problems of the developing world. The ultimate goal of the initiative is to create “deliverable technologies” – health tools that are not only effective, but also inexpensive to produce, easy to distribute, and simple to use in developing countries.

For additional information, please visit www.biosorghum.org