



Date: Friday, 12 September 2008

AFRICA BIOFORTIFIED SORGHUM (ABS) PROJECT APPLAUDS APPROVAL OF CSIR GREENHOUSE PERMIT

Africa Harvest CEO and Coordinator of the Africa Biofortified Sorghum (ABS) Project Dr. Florence Wambugu today welcomed the decision by the South African government to approve greenhouse trials on genetically modified sorghum at the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR)

An Appeal Board set aside an earlier ruling by the regulating authority, the Executive Council of Genetically Modified Organisms, denying the CSIR a permit to undertake contained greenhouse trials on transformed sorghum. The Board was appointed by the Minister of Agriculture and Land Affairs, Ms Lulu Xingwana, in accordance with the country's Genetically Modified Organisms Act (No 15 of 1997).

The CSIR filed an appeal in March 2007, as provided for by the GMO Act. The CSIR is one of the key scientific contributors in an international research project to nutritionally enhance grain sorghum. The ABS Project seeks to develop a more nutritious and easily digestible sorghum that contains increased levels of essential amino acids, especially lysine, increased levels of Vitamins A and E, and more available iron and zinc.

"It is a great step forward," said Dr. Wambugu. "This decision affirms the commitment by the South African government to promote research in sorghum, Africa's most important indigenous crop. This research has the potential to help improve the health and nutrition of millions of Africans in need across the continent. The ABS project recognizes the integrity of the decision-making process and asserts its belief in the GMO regulatory structures in South Africa."

ABS Principal Investigator, Dr. Paul Anderson, said: "The ABS project has made several great strides in the early stages of product development as well as in other aspects of the project. This decision allows the research and development work to continue to make rapid advances."

Dr. Gatsha Mazithulela, executive director of CSIR Biosciences and member of the ABS Steering Committee said: "The decision affirms that various branches of the South African government are united in their policy to develop biotechnology as a key driver for economic growth, job creation and to sustain South Africa's leadership in science and technology on the continent."

The ABS project is composed of an Africa-led consortium of six African and two US-

based organizations bringing together world class research and expertise to tackle malnutrition, one of Africa's most pressing challenges.

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Issued by ABS Project's Communication Department

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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 \$18.6 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.supersorghum.org