

SWEDISH AGENCY FOR RESEARCH COOPERATION'S SUPPORT TO BIOTECHNOLOGY PROGRAMMES

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ABSTRACT

The activities of the Swedish Agency for Research Cooperation (SAREC) are geared to helping developing countries build-up their research capacities. SAREC supports biotechnology related activities such as development of biotechnologies for industrial fermentation, food processing, disease management, and pollution control. Support is also provided to building up indigenous capacity in biosafety and biotechnology policy.

Key Words: Research capacity, Swedish aid agencies, scientific cooperation

RÉSUMÉ

Les activités de l'Agence Suedoise pour la Coopération Scientifique (SAREC) sont destinées à l'appui aux pays en voie de développement pour l'établissement de leur capacité de recherche. SAREC soutient les activités liées à la biotechnologie telles que le développement des biotechnologies pour l'industrie de fermentation, la fabrication des aliments, le contrôle des maladies et de la pollution. Un appui est aussi assuré pour la mise en place des capacités endogènes de politique de biosécurité et biotechnologie.

Mots Clés: Capacité de recherche, l'agence suédoise d'aide, coopération scientifique

The Swedish Agency for Research Cooperation (SAREC) is a governmental aid organisation that has supported this workshop for its contribution to the development of regulation and legislation of biotechnology and the promotion of biosafety in Africa.

On July 1, 1995, all Swedish aid agencies merged into one organisation. SAREC remained intact as a research division. Thus, the main aims of SAREC remain valid and need to be stressed. They are to help developing countries to build up their own research capacity; support research which can help to solve important problems in developing countries; and promote scientific

cooperation between Sweden and developing countries.

Swedish Agency for Research Cooperation comprises four sectors: health and nutrition; rural development and environment; natural sciences, technology and industrialisations; and social sciences and the humanities.

Swedish Agency for Research Cooperation's mode of work is by bilateral support, including MSc and PhD programmes, and infrastructure such as laboratory equipment and scientific literature for university libraries. There are regional research programmes, international research programmes (like the support to

Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research CGIAR), special programmes on the environment and biodiversity, AIDS research, etc. Finally, SAREC acts as a research council for development research in Swedish institutes.

Biotechnology is used as a tool in many medical programmes supported through the health and nutrition sector. The sector for rural development and environment has supported programmes in crop sciences e.g. viral resistance in potato by genetically modified organisms, nitrogen fixing crops, plant and forest genetics, in combination with conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity. Within animal husbandry there is also support to medical diagnostics and vaccines against infectious and parasitic diseases. Policy research, including biosafety and ethical issues, is also crucial. Consultations for developing a multilateral agreement for the world's plant genetic resources is another highlighted issue. The sector for natural sciences and technology

has special programmes for biotechnology development. Support is given to the Biotechnology Advisory Commission at the Stockholm Environment Institute and to the Intermediary Biotechnology service at International Service for National Agricultural Research (ISNAR) in the Hague, Netherlands. Other projects concern the use of biotechnology in industrial fermentation, separation and processing, sulphide dissolution under bacterial action, industrial food processing, and recombinant proteins as biosensors for industrial, medical and environmental applications.

It is stressed in SAREC's biotechnology guidelines that future areas of priority would include environmental biotechnology for cleaning up and rehabilitating the environment and for pollution control and social science research, focusing on the differential impact of biotechnology on society, in particular on the farmers producing traditional export crops.