

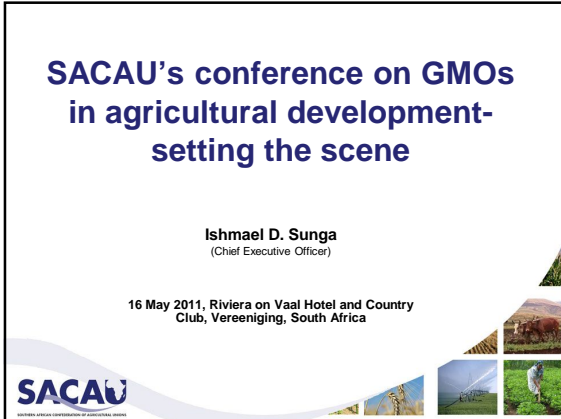
**SACAU**  
SOUTHERN AFRICAN CONFEDERATION OF AGRICULTURAL UNIONS

Tel: +27(0)12 644 0808  
info@sacau.org - www.sacau.org

**SACAU's conference on GMOs in agricultural development- setting the scene**

**Ishmael D. Sunga**  
(Chief Executive Officer)

16 May 2011, Riviera on Vaal Hotel and Country Club, Vereeniging, South Africa




**Presentation structure**

- Background
- Biotechnology in agricultural development
- The good, the bad (and the ugly?)
- Engagement by farmers in the discourse
- Conference objectives
- Organisation of the conference



**Background**

- Policy conference: an annual event
- Focus of policy conferences: generally on current topical issues
- Previous conference themes: climate change, aid for trade, food aid and land
- Current conference theme on "GMOs in agricultural development: perspectives of farmers of southern Africa" could not have been more topical!
- No SACAU's position on GMOs yet



**Innovations/continuous improvement in agricultural development**

- The criticality of agricultural development in developing countries
- The need for agriculture to keep pace with increasing demand for agricultural products
- The need for continuous improvement/innovations in all aspects if sector is to keep pace with rising demand
- The centrality of increased production and productivity in the agricultural development equation
- The need to harness scientific/technological advances for increased production and productivity
- Biotechnology has generally opened new frontiers in agricultural development



**The good, the bad (and the ugly)!**

- Genetic modification: a controversial dimension of advances in biotechnology->raging debates on GMOs
- Polarization of debates, contentious issues and diverging perspectives: technical, economic, social, political, moral, environmental, safety etc
- Divergent views and interests: seed companies, researchers, consumers, NGOs, academics etc
- Facts versus emotion – who wins?
- Concerns are understandable, yet potential benefits are too significant to ignore
- Careful not to throw away the baby with the bathwater!



### Engagement by farmers in the discourse

- Developments in GMOs and the accompanying debates have potentially profound positive and negative impacts on farming enterprises
- Are farmers onlookers in the raging debates?
- Limited information, knowledge and understanding of GMOs by farmers a key factor
- Farmers beware!: fight your own corner, take advantage of the opportunities from GMOs, and manage the associated risks
- Need for responsible development and promotion of GMOs in agriculture



### Conference objectives

- Unpacking/demystifying GMOs-informing/educating/ updating FOs about developments on GMOs and related issues
- To sensitise FOs of the potential implications that GMOs have in agric development and farmers' enterprises
- To develop a coordinated response by FOs in the region and SACAU to GMOs issues - development of key messages and position statements
- Ultimately the capacity of FOs to effectively engage in the discourse and influence the developments to their advantage will be enhanced
- The above factored in the design of structure and content of the conference



### Organisation of the conference

- Different perspectives: pro and anti-GMO, current developments, trade implications, financing, policy
- The conference is primarily organized for FOs
- The jury from a producer perspective from FOs
- Delegates/invited guests are a key resource



Thank You  
and Enjoy!

**SACAU**  
SOUTHERN AFRICAN CONFEDERATION OF AGRICULTURAL UNIONS  
info@sacau.org - www.sacau.org