



Bio-fertilizer Regulation in Ethiopia: Progress towards Effective Enforcement

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Back Ground

Regulation of fertilizers in Ethiopia is implemented by the Plant Health Regulatory Directorate (PHRD) of the Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources. The country has a fertilizer policy that was established in 1993, and revised in 2014, whose final version is yet to be approved; and a Fertilizer proclamation No. 137/1998 of 1998, that is currently under revision. Both the above proclamation and the policy did not have provisions for biofertilizers, but are currently under review to incorporate them. In addition, there are personnel capacity limitations and lack of dedicated laboratory for biofertilizer quality control.

Quality agricultural products guarantee protection of farmers and other people from potential risks of use of commercial agricultural input and minimization of health and environmental hazards. At the same time, they enhance food security and economic advancement. During the past 10 years, new bio-fertilizers, bio-pesticides and chemical agro-inputs have been locally manufactured, imported and commercialized, but these products were

often insufficiently evaluated for quality and efficacy due to insufficient regulatory mechanisms.

Therefore, there is a need to build or strengthen the system in order to have the capacity to evaluate, register and perform quality control of such products to ensure that farmers only utilize products that are safe and effective and can result in profitable yield increases.

Current Progress

In 2012, a proposal on Biofertilizers Technology releasing mechanism was developed by the Ethiopian Institute of Agricultural Research (EIAR) and sent to the Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources (MoA&NR) for decision. Finalization of this document is underway.

A national workshop on Agricultural Technology Evaluation, Registration and Release Strategy was organized by Agriculture Transformation Agency (ATA) in June, 2014 and EIAR presented a paper on the need for quality control and regulatory mechanisms for biofertilizers at the workshop. The strategy document was

finalized by the ATA and submitted to MoA&NR for endorsement and approval and legislation procedures

The frameworks for the regulation of biofertilizers in Ethiopia are not yet fully established. As pointed out above, the fertilizer policy and proclamation do not have provisions for biofertilizer, but there are efforts to revise and include them. The Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources is the mandated institution to enforce biofertilizer regulations. With the assistance of COMPRO II Project, Plant Health Regulatory Directorate and Ethiopian Standards Agency with the support of EIAR have developed draft registration guidelines, Standards and Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) (test methods) for biofertilizers. In addition, there a process to establish a quality control lab for agricultural input.

Current Challenges

- The fertilizer policy and proclamation revision to include biofertilizer are not completed, and this continues to hinder effective implementation of the developed registration guidelines and standards.

- There is no mandated lab for quality control of biofertilizers by the ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources.

Way Forward

1. The ministry of Agriculture and Natural resources to ensure that the fertilizer policy is approved, and the proclamation is approved and passed by parliament.
2. The draft biofertilizer registration guidelines to be approved and implemented by the ministry of Agriculture and Natural resources.
3. The draft biofertilizer standards to be approved by Ethiopian Standards Agency.
4. Establishment of laboratory for biofertilizer quality control for regulatory enforcement.
5. Continuous training of enforcement personnel.
6. Establishment of a sustainable financing mechanism for enforcement of the regulatory frameworks for biofertilizers.

The COMPRO II project is managed by the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA) and currently covers Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda in East Africa Ghana and Nigeria in West Africa). Objective 3 of the project aims to institutionalize and strengthen regulatory environments for commercial products including bio-fertilizers and bio-pesticides. This objective is led by African Agricultural Technology Foundation (AATF). The project is supported by Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.