

Alliance for Commodity Trade in Eastern and Southern Africa (ACTESA)



Progress of Biotechnology Program

By

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Third Stakeholders Meeting, ACTESA

11-12 May 2010

Lusaka, Zambia



Outline

- **Related issues from GISAMA meeting (1)**
- **COMESA/ACTESA Regional biotech agenda in perspective (5)**
- **Wise and responsible use of GMOs: What does it take? (1)**
- **Reasons to enhancing the regional biotech agenda (2)**
- **Recent progress in COMESA region (1)**



Related issues from GISAMA meeting

- **ESA becoming rapidly food deficit region**
- **Wheat is deriving the import rise**
- **Unclear and unpredictable GMO policies by importing countries – Market uncertainty**
- **Appropriate technology**
- **Search for guidance on GMOs**



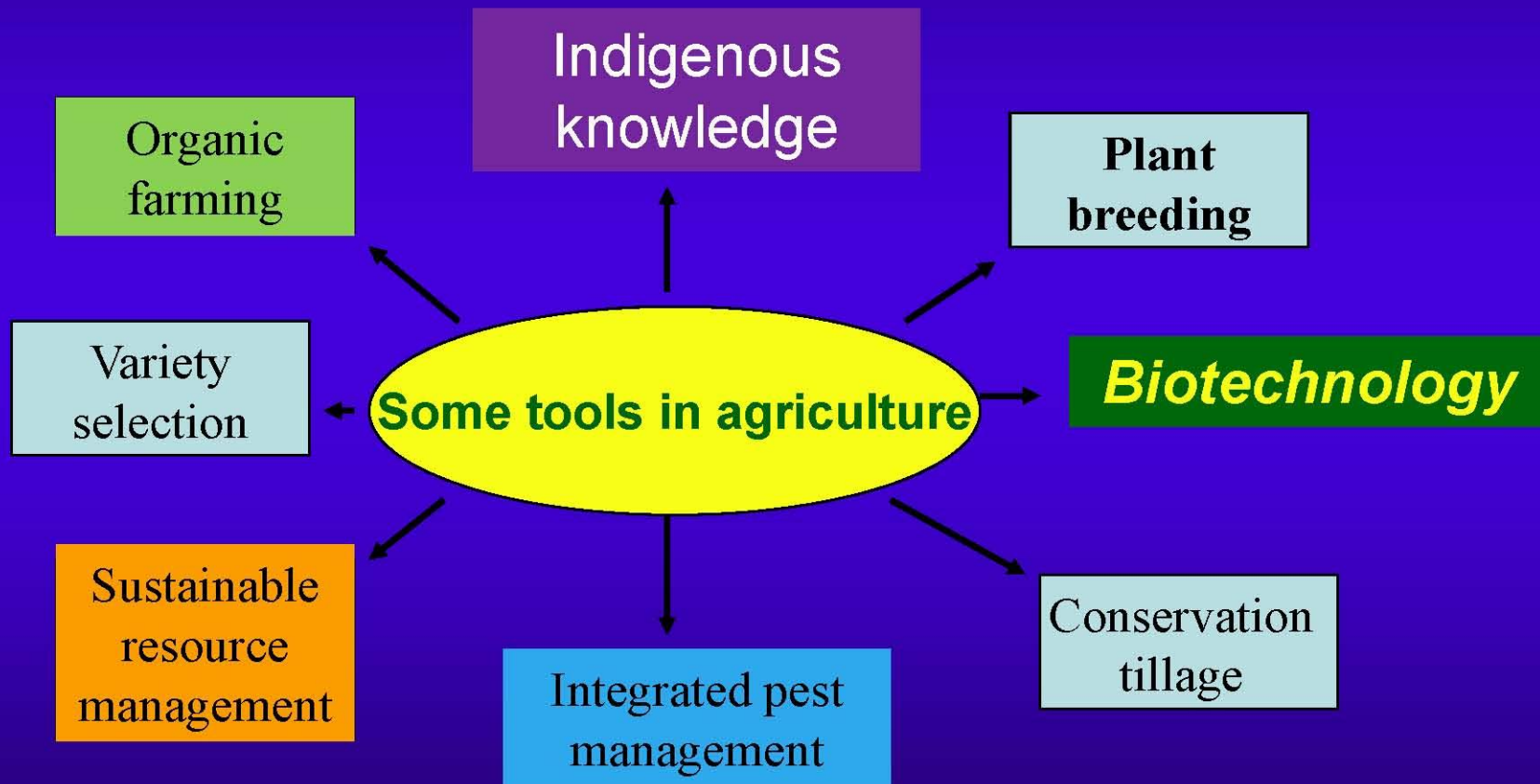
COMESA/ACTESA REGIONAL BIOTECH AGENDA IN PERSPECTIVE

The overarching reality

- **Low productivity of the agriculture sector**
 - Uncompetitive trade
 - Food insecurity challenges
 - Food aid with GM content

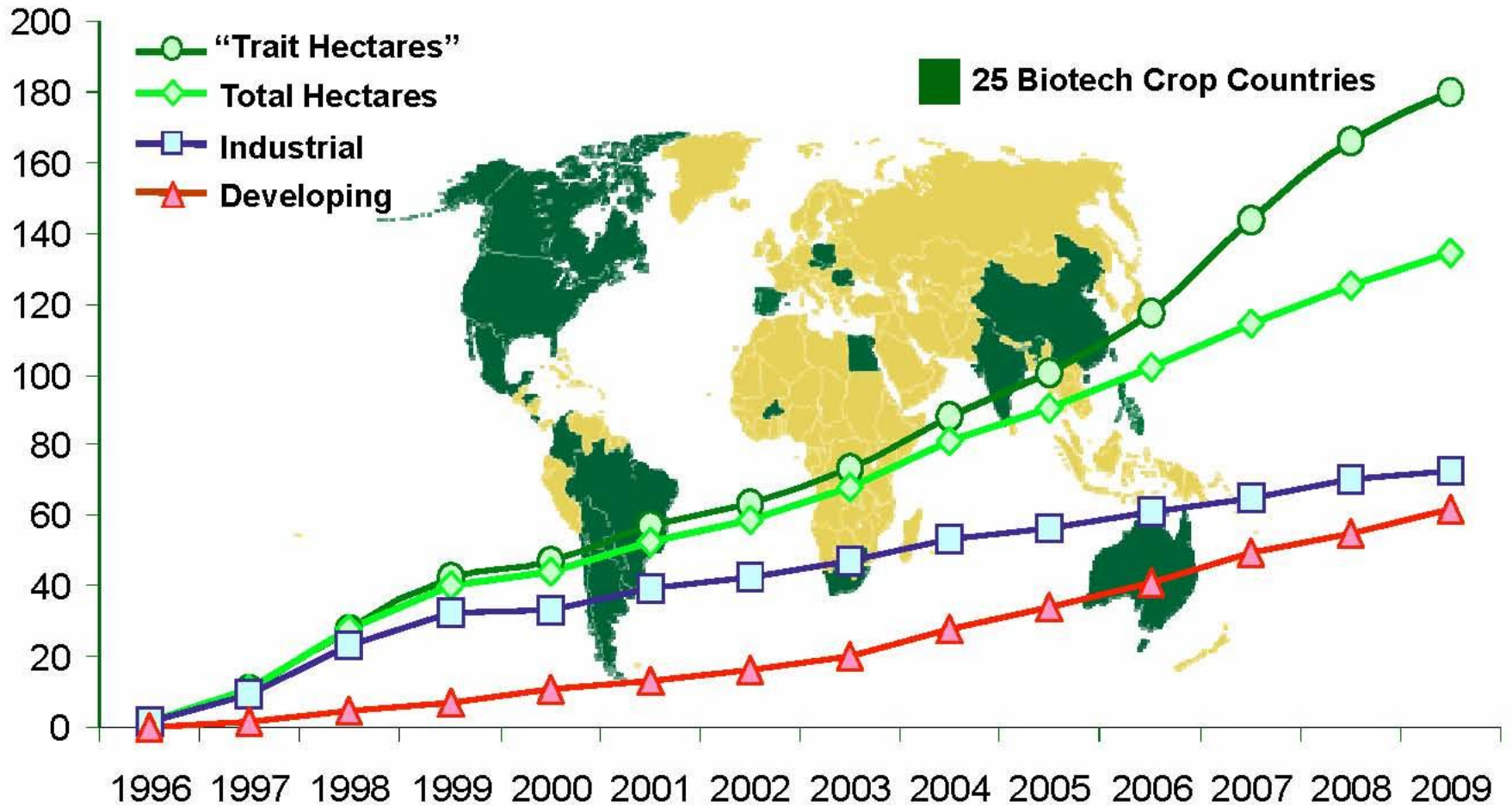
Real need to improve agriculture sector

Different Options



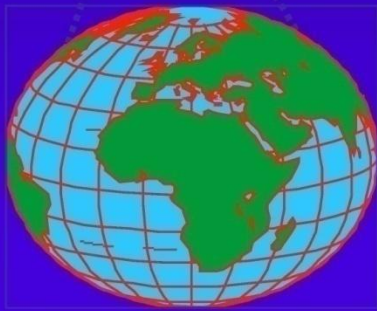
Note: Biotechnology provides tools; **NOT a SYSTEM** and will not replace traditional agriculture – **COMPLEMENTARITY IS KEY!**

GLOBAL AREA OF BIOTECH CROPS Million Hectares (1996 to 2009)



A record 14 million farmers, in 25 countries, planted 134 million hectares (330 million acres) in 2009, a sustained increase of 7% or 9 million hectares (22 million acres) over 2008.

GM crops have generated a network of opinions



Miracle or
Monster?



and...varied perceptions on risks and benefits

Absolute safety has never been achieved with any known technology

(Nature: Vol. 409 of 8/2/01)



14 years,
no known
cases of
"disaster"





REASONS TO ENHANCING THE REGIONAL BIOTECH AGENDA

- **Decisions of COMESA policy organs for guidance on how to handle issues related to GMOs**
 - The RABESA initiative since 2001
- **COMESA countries are at different levels of advance**
- **Transboundary movements are inevitable**
- **Knock-on effects: Burkina Faso**
- **Demand from the private sector**
- **Preparedness is necessary**
- **Increased involvement of African actors**
- **Increased investment**



Major requirements for wise and responsible use of GM crops in Africa

- **Political will and support**
- **Relevant biotech solutions for African problems**
- **Transparent and accurate public communications**
- **Capacity building**



Recent progress in the COMESA region

- **Harmonized Policies and Guidelines developed**
 - GMO planting, trade and food-aid
 - Regional biosafety and GMO risk assessment unit
 - Panel of Experts and risk-assessment subcommittees
- **Biosafety Roadmap developed**
- **Communication Strategy developed**
- **Recommended long-term biotechnology program**



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Thank you!