

BIOTECHNOLGY FOR BUSINESSES IN YABT

COMMENTS BY

Hector Herrera - Primary Specialist with the OAS in the area of Biotechnology and the Agriculture Industry

According to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety(Montreal, Canada, 2000) “Modern Biotechnology means the application of a) In vitro nucleic acid techniques, including recombinant deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA) and direct injection of nucleic acid into cells or organelles, or b) fusion of cells beyond the taxonomic family, that overcome natural physiological reproductive or recombination barriers and that are not techniques used in traditional breeding and selection”.

Applications in biotechnology to create new business are growing today in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC). Biotechnology can provide significant benefits to society through the improvement in the quality of life. The benefit of biotechnology in developed countries like USA include, among others, improvement in crop production, food quality (agriculture, aquaculture and livestock), pharmaceutical production, diagnostics for pathogens, and bioremediation. For example, genetically modified tomatoes characterized by a uniform ripeness and a harmonized color are already available in the USA market. Another example is golden rice or arroz dorado, rich in iron and in beta carotene which is the precursor of vitamin A. This enriched rice with high nutritional value can prevent blindness in children all around the world.

These examples illustrate the impact and success of biotechnology in our lives, the result of a strong investment in human and material resources, government support and academic involvement.

In LAC to achieve biotechnology proficiency, the countries are making efforts to increase their commitment to research and development, human resource development and infrastructure, and to establish a legal framework and biosafety for biotechnology and the biotechnology business. In the policy aspect, the Ministers and high authorities of Science and Technology of the Western Hemisphere have included in the Plan of Action a Biotechnology Initiative for the Americas, favoring the biotechnology businesses in the coming years.

Businesses are the bridge to bring research results into products for society's consumption. YABT can contribute support and build the bridge by bringing together Young scientists and technologists for the creation of their own businesses.