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Report Name: Agricultural Biotechnology Annual

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Post: Tunis

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Report Highlights:

Tunisia drafted a national biosafety framework in 2014 but has continued to postpone its adoption and implementation. The draft framework is currently being reviewed by Tunisia's executive branch for debate and vote by its Parliament. There is no timeline set for its completion. Tunisia currently places no restrictions on the importation of genetically engineered (GE) crops and Tunisian agricultural biotechnology activities are limited to scientific capacity building. No GE products have been developed or commercialized for local production. Tunisia imports agricultural products derived from GE technologies, particularly feed grains used by its livestock and poultry industries.

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Executive Summary:

Tunisia's Ministry of Environment took the lead on adoption and implementation of the country's draft biosafety framework in 2019/20. The framework was drafted in 2014 with the support of the United Nations Environment Program, but its adoption has been continuously postponed. The political situation resulting from the COVID-19 crisis has led the Government of Tunisia to prioritize other urgent political and economic legislation. As a result, there is no timetable set for a parliamentary review and vote.

Tunisia places no restrictions on the importation of genetically engineered (GE) crops. However, Tunisian activities relating to agricultural biotechnology have been limited to scientific capacity building. No GE products have been developed or commercialized for local production. Tunisia continues import agricultural products derived from GE technologies, particularly feed grains used by its livestock and poultry sectors.

CHAPTER 1: PLANT BIOTECHNOLOGY

PART A: Production and Trade

- a) Product Development: While Tunisia has no GE products, seed, or propagation material under development, it does conduct limited research activities in government universities and research institutes, namely the Tunisian Biotech Center, which falls under the Ministry of Higher Education, and the National Agronomic Research Institute, which falls under the Ministries of Agriculture and Higher Education.
- b) Commercial Production: None.
- c) Exports: Not applicable.
- d) Imports: Tunisia imports products derived from genetic engineering including corn products (Americas: 34% market share) and soy products (Americas: 82%). Imports of feed ingredients provide essential inputs for Tunisia's livestock industries.

Tunisia's Production, Supply, and Distribution Estimates, 2019/20

Commodity	Production	Imports	Exports	Domestic Consumption
Corn	0	1,100	0	1,100
Oilseed, Soybean	0	650	0	650
Meal, Soybean	455	35	8	505
Oil, Soybean	107	90	5	190
Oil, Rapeseed	0	2	0	2

All units are in 1,000 Metric Tons. *Official USDA Estimates, 2019/20* Source: <https://apps.fas.usda.gov/psdonline>

- e) Food Aid: Not applicable. Tunisia is neither recipient nor provider of food aid.
- f) Trade Barriers: None.

PART B: Policy

- a) Regulatory Framework: With the support of the United Nations Environment Program, Tunisia drafted a biosafety framework in 2014, which is currently under review by the executive branch (Ministries of Environment, Trade, Higher Education and Research, Finance, Health, and

Agriculture) and eventual debate by the legislative branch. The proposed framework includes the creation of a National Biosafety Committee, which would assist in the implementation of the regulations relating to biotechnology. The Committee, however, will not be formed until after Parliament approves the biosafety framework. The development of Tunisia's biosafety framework has been delayed due to more pressing political and economic needs including but not limited to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

- b) Approvals: Not applicable.
- c) Stacked or Pyramided Event Approvals: Not applicable.
- d) Field Testing: Not applicable.
- e) Innovative Biotechnologies: Not applicable.
- f) Coexistence: Not applicable.
- g) Labeling and Traceability: Tunisia's Ministries of Trade and Public Health published a [Joint Order \(in French\)](#) on September 3, 2008, which states, "*Art. 7 - In the case of a foodstuff containing genetically modified organisms, mention must be made clearly on the labeling according to the regulations in force.*"
- h) Monitoring and Testing: Several Tunisian laboratories, namely the National Gene Bank, the Technical Agro-Food Center, the Central Laboratory of Analysis and Trials, and the Seed Control Laboratory have the capacity to monitor and test for GE products if needed.
- i) Low Level Presence (LLP) Policy: Not applicable.
- j) Additional Regulatory Requirements: Not applicable.
- k) Intellectual Property Right (IPR): Tunisia is a member of the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), and as a member of the WTO is also party to the TRIPS agreement. Applicable Tunisian laws with respect to IPR include [Law # 2001-36](#) (in French) enacted on March 17, 2001 and completed by the [Law # 2007-50](#) (in French) dated July 23, 2007. Registration with the National Institute for Standardization and Industrial Property (INNORPI) is required to obtain IPR protection and is normally issued upon filling an application for registration.
- l) Cartagena Protocol Ratification: Tunisia ratified the Cartagena Protocol in June 2002.
- m) International Treaties and Forums: Tunisia is a signatory of the Convention on Biological Diversity (May 1993) and is a member of the International Plant Protection Convention and Codex Alimentarius.
- n) Related Issues: Not applicable.

PART C: Marketing

- a) Public/Private Opinion: Tunisian policymakers and researchers are largely aware of biotechnology's potential to help Tunisia alleviate national food security challenges. Meanwhile, most Tunisian consumers remain unaware of biotechnology, and virtually all of those that are aware feel they are not well-informed.
- b) Market Acceptance/Studies: Not applicable.

CHAPTER 2: ANIMAL BIOTECHNOLOGY

PART D: Production and Trade

- a) Product Development: Neither GE animals nor cloning are under development in Tunisia.
- b) Commercial Production: Tunisia produces no GE livestock or clones.
- c) Exports: Not Applicable.
- d) Imports: Not Applicable.
- e) Trade Barriers: Not Applicable.

PART E: Policy

- a) Regulatory Framework: Same as *Plant Biotechnology*.
- b) Approvals: Not Applicable.
- c) Innovative Biotechnologies: Not Applicable.
- d) Labeling and Traceability: Same as *Plant Biotechnology*.
- e) Additional Regulatory Requirements: Same as *Plant Biotechnology*.
- f) Intellectual Property Rights (IPR): Same as *Plant Biotechnology*.
- g) International Treaties and Forums: Tunisia is a member of Codex Alimentarius and the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE).

h) Related Issues: Not Applicable.

PART F: Marketing

a) Public/Private Opinions: Same as *Plant Biotechnology*.

b) Market Acceptance/Studies: Not Applicable.

CHAPTER 3: MICROBIAL BIOTECHNOLOGY

PART G: Production and Trade

a) Commercial Production: Tunisia produces no food ingredients derived from microbial biotechnology

b) Exports: Not Applicable.

c) Imports: Not Applicable.

d) Trade Barriers: Not Applicable.

PART H: Policy

a) Regulatory Framework: Not Applicable.

b) Approvals: Not Applicable.

c) Labeling and Traceability: Not Applicable

d) Monitoring and Testing: Not Applicable

e) Additional Regulatory Requirements: Not Applicable

f) Intellectual Property Rights(IPR): Not Applicable

g) Related Issues: Not Applicable.

PART I: Marketing

b) Public/Private Opinions: Same as *Plant Biotechnology*.

b) Market Acceptance/Studies: Not Applicable

Attachments:

No Attachments