

Required Report: Required - Public Distribution

Date: October 22, 2021

Report Number: TS2021-0006

Report Name: Agricultural Biotechnology Annual

Country: Tunisia

Post: Tunis

Report Category: Biotechnology and Other New Production Technologies

Prepared By: Nabil Maouia

Approved By: Robert Wright

Report Highlights:

Tunisia postponed non-urgent reforms throughout 2021 due to an unstable political environment and the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, there is no timeframe for Parliament to review and vote on Tunisia's biosafety framework, and so the policy, which was drafted in 2014, remains on hold. Tunisia currently places no restrictions on the importation of genetically engineered (GE) crops. However, Tunisian activities relating to agricultural biotechnology activities have been limited to building scientific capacity and developing a basic understanding of the technology. No GE products have been developed or commercialized for local production. Tunisia continues to import agricultural products derived from GE technologies, particularly feed grains used to support its development as a competitive livestock and poultry producer.

Executive Summary:

Tunisia postponed non-urgent reforms throughout 2021 due to an unstable political environment and the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, there is no timeframe for Parliament to review and vote on Tunisia’s biosafety framework. The framework was originally drafted in 2014 with the support of the United Nations Environment Program, and the Ministry of Environment continues to lead an internal discussion and governmental review.

Tunisia currently places no restrictions on the importation of genetically engineered (GE) crops. However, Tunisian activities relating to agricultural biotechnology activities have been limited to building scientific capacity and developing a basic understanding of the technology. No GE products have been developed or commercialized for local production. Tunisia continues import agricultural products derived from GE technologies, particularly feed grains used to support its development as a competitive livestock and poultry producer.

Table of Contents

Executive Summary:	2
CHAPTER 1: PLANT BIOTECHNOLOGY	3
PART A: Production and Trade	3
PART B: Policy	3
PART C: Marketing	5
CHAPTER 2: ANIMAL BIOTECHNOLOGY	5
PART D: Production and Trade	5
PART E: Policy	5
PART F: Marketing	6
CHAPTER 3: MICROBIAL BIOTECHNOLOGY	6
PART G: Production and Trade	6
PART H: Policy	6
PART I: Marketing	7

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 institutes.
- b) Commercial Production: None.
- c) Exports: Not applicable.
- d) Imports: Tunisia is a net importer of corn and soy products, while a lesser importer of alfalfa products, rapeseed products, and cotton products. Imported feed ingredients are a necessity for Tunisia's livestock and poultry production. Imported sugar and vegetable oils are subsidized by the State, resulting in high consumption levels.

Official USDA Production, Supply, and Distribution Estimates, 2020/21

Commodity	Production	Imports	Exports	Domestic Consumption	Unit Description
Corn	0	900	0	900	(1,000 MT)
Oilseed, Soybean	0	650	0	635	(1,000 MT)
Meal, Soybean	426	90	10	470	(1,000 MT)
Oil, Soybean	99	95	0	211	(1,000 MT)
Oil, Rapeseed	0	2	0	2	(1,000 MT)

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 with the executive branch awaiting debate. 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.

- 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: While Tunisia's Ministries of Trade and Public Health published a Joint Order on September 3, 2008, 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,*" there are no such regulations currently 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 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 Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) agreement. Applicable Tunisian laws with respect to IPR include Law # 2001-36 enacted on March 17, 2001 and completed by the Law # 2007-50 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 out an application for registration.
- l) Cartagena Protocol Ratification: Tunisia ratified the Cartagena Protocol in January 2003.
- 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

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

b) Market Acceptance/Studies: Not applicable.

Attachments:

No Attachments