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Report Highlights:
While absent a formal biosafety framework, following guidance published in September 2012, Morocco adheres to the precautionary principle in respect to justifying a ban on genetically-engineered products from local cultivation and from their presence in products for human consumption while simultaneously recognizing their international presence and acceptance as an animal feed source. Agricultural biotechnology activities remain active but limited largely to research with no developed genetically-engineered products having been commercialized for local production. In trade, Morocco continues to take advantage of agricultural biotechnology resources, particularly to support its development as a competitive livestock and poultry producer.

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Section I. Executive Summary

While absent a formal biosafety framework, Morocco's National Office for Food Safety (ONSSA), located within the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, Rural Development, Water, and Forests, is the competent authority in charge of implementing regulations and agreements related to biotechnology. The Ministry published guidance in September 2012 to clarify Morocco's position on genetically-engineered products, which effectively states that Morocco follows the precautionary principle in respect to justifying the ban on genetically-engineered products from local cultivation and from their presence in products for human consumption while simultaneously recognizing their international presence and acceptance as an animal feed source.

Under ONSSA's oversight, agricultural biotechnology activities in Morocco remain active but limited largely to research with no developed genetically-engineered products having been commercialized for local production.

In trade, Morocco continues to take advantage of agricultural biotechnology resources, particularly to support its development as a competitive livestock and poultry producer.

Section II. Plant and Animal Biotechnology

CHAPTER 1: PLANT BIOTECHNOLOGY

PART A: PRODUCTION AND TRADE

a) Product Development: Morocco is actively engaged in agricultural biotechnology research and development as a means for addressing the country's food security challenges. This work is led by the National Agronomic Research Institute (INRA) and focused on finding solutions for Morocco's major crops, including cereals, forage, date palm, citrus, and olives.

b) Commercial Production: None.

c) Exports: Not applicable.

d) Imports: Morocco is a major importer of soy products ($625 million; Americas-60% market share), corn products ($550 million; Americas-90%), and sugar products ($550 million; Brazil-75%) while a lesser importer of rapeseed products ($20 million; Canada-5%), cotton products ($15 million; Americas-60%), and alfalfa products ($10 million; US-15%). Imported feed ingredients are a necessity for Morocco's livestock and poultry production, which Morocco also plans to expand. Demand for imported sugar has been supported by government subsidies at the retail level, though they are being phased out.

Official USDA Production, Supply, and Distribution Estimates, 2016/17

Commodity	Production	Imports	Exports	Domestic Consumption	Unit Description
Corn	200	2,500	0	2,650	(1,000 MT)
Oilseed, Soybean	0	120	0	120	(1,000 MT)
Meal, Soybean	94	560	0	655	(1,000 MT)
Oil, Soybean	22	495	20	500	(1,000 MT)
Oilseed, Rapeseed	1	0	0	1	(1,000 MT)
Meal, Rapeseed	0	68	0	70	(1,000 MT)
Oil, Rapeseed	0	4	0	4	(1,000 MT)
Sugar, Centrifugal	550	1,050	400	1,210	(1,000 MT)
Cotton	1	45	0	45	(1,000 480-lb Bales)

Source: https://apps.fas.usda.gov/psdonline

e) Food Aid: Not applicable. Morocco is neither a recipient nor provider of food aid.

f) Trade Barriers: See Policy/Regulatory Framework below.

PART B: POLICY

a) Regulatory Framework:

The legal foundation on which the Ministry of Agriculture regulates GE products was originally based on an internal memorandum, dated August 1999, which imposed a blanket prohibition on imports of

biotechnology products and included no details on the product coverage, certification, testing, or threshold levels. This two-paragraph memo, signed by subordinates from the Ministry of Agriculture, was issued at a time when various food safety and health related issues (GE, BSE, Dioxin, FMD, etc.) were dominating headlines in Europe. The memorandum initially raised concerns because of the uncertainties of its implementation but those concerns diminished over time.

In 2008, the Ministry of Agriculture sent a draft law relevant to the introduction, use, and marketing of biotech products to various other ministries for review; however, it was rescinded in 2011 for further revision by the Ministry of Agriculture and has since remained dormant.

In September 2012, the Ministry of Agriculture published the following on its website:

> ***"Transgenic foods banned for human consumption in Morocco"***
>
> *"Following the study conducted by French researchers suggesting the dangerousness of the consumption of certain transgenic maize (GMO) and whose results are being verified within the European Union, the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries Maritime wishes to provide the following clarifications:"*
>
> *"In Morocco, under the precautionary principle, transgenic foods are banned for human consumption. No presence of GMOs is allowed in imported products intended for human consumption, they are absent in the national agricultural production and also in all the inputs used in Moroccan agricultural crops (seeds, etc.)."*
>
> *"Practice and legislation around the world admit their presence in certain foods for animal feed. It should be noted that the transgenic maize varieties targeted by the French study are not authorized in Morocco for animal feed purposes."*
>
> *"The European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) has taken the published study to verify its content and veracity. The Ministry of Agriculture and Maritime Fisheries remains vigilant regarding any new development."*

National Biosafety Committee (NBC)

In October 2011, Morocco's then-recently established National Office for Food Safety (ONSSA) became the competent government authority in charge of implementing regulations and agreements related to biotechnology, formerly the function of the National Biosafety Committee (NBC). Consequently, the role of the NBC was significantly diminished. The NBC was created in April 2005 to provide counseling on the use, handling, transportation, import, distribution and marketing of biotech organisms. The responsibilities of the NBC encompass national policy, risk assessment, legal framework, and research.

b) Approvals: None. Morocco's Decree # 1-69-169, dated July 25, 1969, is the basic law regulating seed production and commercialization. The law is silent on GE seeds.

c) Stacked or Pyramided Event Approvals: Not Applicable.

d) Field Testing: ONSSA has not permitted open field-testing of GE crops.

e) Innovative Biotechnologies: None.

f) Coexistence: Not applicable.

g) Labeling: GE labeling is performed on a voluntary basis in Morocco. However, on several occasions, European customers and consumer groups have requested from their Moroccan suppliers that the exported products be free from GE products (e.g., vegetable oil in canned sardines, tomatoes, etc.). For consumer products entering Morocco, a GE-free label may be included to avoid potentially being asked to provide a GE-free certificate.

h) Monitoring and Testing: Morocco has a history of partnering with EU laboratories

i) Low Level Presence (LLP) Policy: Not applicable.

j) Additional Regulatory Requirements: Not applicable.

k) Intellectual Property Right (IPR): Available on ONSSA's website and summarized in a GAIN report, in 1997, Morocco issued its basic law #9/94 for IPR of plant variety protection, later enforced on October 28, 2002, with the publication of various implementing orders. In September 2015, ONSSA published a summary of plant varieties that had undergone consideration for protection but with no reference made to GE-products.

l) Cartagena Protocol Ratification: Morocco signed the Cartagena Protocol in May 2000, ratified it on April 25, 2011, and it entered into force on July 24, 2011. The Ministry of Energy, Mining, Water and Environment is the focal point, which serves as a liaison for information and compliance. In October 2011, ONSSA took charge of the implementation of the Cartagena protocol. On February 15, 2013, Morocco published its National Biosafety Framework, but has not established a corresponding legal framework.

On December 9, 2011 Morocco signed the Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit-sharing. The Moroccan Government Council and the Ministerial Council approved the Protocol on March 22 and June 17, 2012, respectively; however, the Government of Morocco has yet to ratify it.

m) International Treaties/Fora: Morocco is a member of the WTO, the International Plant Protection Convention, and the Codex Alimentarius.

n) Related Issues: None

PART C: MARKETING

a) Public/Private Opinions: Moroccan researchers are largely aware of biotechnology's promise to help Morocco alleviate national food security challenges. Meanwhile, policymakers, while open to finding pragmatic solutions will look to follow Europe for the foreseeable future. The last serious media interest in GE products occurred in 2012-2014.

b) Market Acceptance: Lacking a local champion willing to publically defend sound science, Moroccan consumers are likely to be skeptical toward agricultural biotechnology and simply rely on European policy and an abundance of French media for how they should think. Morocco will also continue to consider its significant export interests in Europe before making any changes to current policy or practice.

c) Marketing Studies: Not applicable.

CHAPTER 2: ANIMAL BIOTECHNOLOGY

PART D: PRODUCTION AND TRADE

a) Product Development: To safeguard Morocco's citrus crop, it has developed a genetically-engineered medfly; however, open field trials have not been approved.

b) Commercial Production: None.

c) Exports: See *Plant Biotechnology*. Additionally, ONSSA notes on its website that "[surveillance] plans are implemented with the objective of preserving the health of consumers and enabling our products to access the markets of the European Union"

d) Imports: Not applicable.

e) Trade Barriers: See *Plant Biotechnology*.

PART E: POLICY

a) Regulatory Framework: See *Plant Biotechnology*.

b) Innovative Biotechnologies: None.

c) Labeling and traceability: See *Plant Biotechnology*.

d) Intellectual Property Rights (IPR): See *Plant Biotechnology*.

e) International Treaties and Forums: Morocco is a member of the WTO, the World Animal Health Organization (OIE), and Codex Alimentarious.

f) Related Issues: None

PART F: MARKETING

a) Public/Private Opinions: See *Plant Biotechnology*.

b) Market Acceptance: See *Plant Biotechnology*.