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Report Highlights:

Although drafted in 2014, Tunisia's biosafety framework is still with the government for internal discussions, with no timeline on when it will be enacted. Since then and presently, political and economic needs have taken precedence. While free of restrictions, agricultural biotechnology activities in Tunisia have effectively remained limited to building scientific capacity and understanding of the technology with no genetically engineered products having been developed or commercialized for local production. In trade, Tunisia continues to take advantage of agricultural biotechnology resources, particularly to support its development as a competitive livestock and poultry producer.

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Executive Summary:

Tunisia's biosafety framework, drafted in 2014 with the support of the United Nations Environment Program, was sent to parliament for review the same year. In early 2018, parliament, without reviewing the framework, sent it to the Ministry of Environment to lead internal discussions with other ministries and for finalization. Once the framework is final, it will be returned to parliament for debate and approval; however, no estimate on timing is available. Meanwhile, the National Biosafety Committee, which would assist political and administrative decision making, is also awaiting establishment. These matters remain lesser priorities behind more pressing political and economic needs.

While free of restrictions, agricultural biotechnology activities in Tunisia have effectively remained limited to building scientific capacity and understanding of the technology. No genetically engineered (GE) products have been developed or commercialized for local production.

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

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 such as the National Agronomic Institute of Tunisia and the Biotechnology Center of Borj Cedria.

- b) Commercial Production: None.
- c) Exports: Not applicable.
- d) Imports: Tunisia is a major importer of corn products (Americas: 36% market share), soy products (Americas: 84%), and sugar products (Brazil: 67%) while a lesser importer of alfalfa products (EU: 99%), rapeseed products (EU: 100%), and cotton products (EU: 73%). Imported feed ingredients are a necessity for Tunisia's livestock and poultry production. Imported sugar and vegetable oils are controlled by the State with relatively high consumption levels supported by subsidized consumer prices.

Official USDA Production, Supply, and Distribution Estimates, 2017/18

Commodity	Production	Imports	Exports	Domestic Consumption	Unit Description
Corn	0	1,100	0	1,100	(1,000 MT)
Oilseed, Soybean	0	620	0	595	(1,000 MT)
Meal, Soybean	459	40	12	550	(1,000 MT)
Oil, Soybean	109	140	5	240	(1,000 MT)
Oil, Rapeseed	0	2	0	2	(1,000 MT)
Sugar, Centrifugal	15	440	3	442	(1,000 MT)
Cotton	10	20	0	30	(1,000 480 lb. Bales)

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, in 2014, Tunisia drafted a biosafety framework, which is currently with Parliament awaiting debate and approval. Meanwhile, the National Biosafety Committee, which would assist political and administrative decision making, is also awaiting establishment. These matters remain lesser priorities behind more pressing political, economic, and security needs. Therefore, a timeframe of when this will occur has yet to be determined.
- 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: While Tunisia's Ministries of Trade and Public Health published a Joint Order 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,*" no such regulations are 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, also party to the 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 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 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) Intellectual Property Rights (IPR): Same as *Plant Biotechnology*.
- f) International Treaties and Forums: Tunisia is a member of Codex Alimentarius and the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE).
- g) Related Issues: Not Applicable.

PART F: Marketing

- a) Public/Private Opinions: Same as *Plant Biotechnology*.
- b) Market Acceptance/Studies: Not Applicable.