

## **NEED FOR PROTOCOLS FOR SHARING OF AND ACCESS TO RESEARCH FACILITIES IN KENYA**

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Research institutions in the country acquire their facilities and equipment at different times. Due to limited budgetary allocation of less than 1% to research and development, an institution may have to wait for five or more years to get funds to renew their facilities. This is a global reality. This reality calls in the need for sharing of and access to available facilities. Kenya has two major international laboratories namely; the International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI) and the International Center for Insect Physiology and Ecology (ICIPE) that have state of the art research centres such as KEMRI, KEFRI, Kenya Marine Fisheries Research Institute and Kenya Agricultural and Livestock Research Organisation (KALRO) also have well equipped laboratories and experimental sites. Universities also have research facilities, most of which are suitable for basic research. These research institutions do not ‘talk’ to each other. There is no national inventory of the research facilities held by each institution. Collaboration and cooperation in research is done on an ad hoc basis, i.e. without clear memoranda of understanding. Several challenges are likely to arise where there is no agreement on the use of facilities. First and foremost is that deserving researchers would be unfairly denied access to much needed facilities. Secondly, where inventions are made, the question of ownership of intellectual property (IP) can lead to prolonged litigation. Thirdly, where equipment like computers and motor vehicles are bought using research grants, ownership of the equipment at the end of the project can be a source of conflict. Fourthly, issues of wear and tear with respect to replacement of consumables and accidental breakages ought to be determined before access is granted. Fifthly, is the question of duplication of resources. Sixthly, some equipment could become obsolete before they are maximally used. This paper seeks to analyse the challenges around ‘sharing of and access to’ research facilities and make recommendations for watertight protocols as a solution to the challenges.

Key words: research facilities, protocols, IP ownership.

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