

# **Evolving conversations and policy considerations on data transportability in Africa**

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## **Abstract**

The African Union Biosafety Regulators' Forum (AU-BRF) was established as a biosafety governance framework to facilitate cooperation among Africa Union (AU) member states on matters of biosafety regulation. This continental regulatory platform seeks to provide requisite technical leadership in the development and implementation of agreed common technical standards for regulating modern biotechnology and emerging technologies. In recent times, the platform has been used to discuss common topics of interest to the region, and for which a harmonized approach would be beneficial either within regional economic communities or for the continent as a whole. Subsequently, data transportability was identified as a topic of interest to member states. The AU-BRF considers data transportability as a key enabler for access to relevant scientific data to facilitate timely decision making. Though there exists some evidence of data transportability in Africa, dialogue that results in policy coherence and the adoption of a harmonized approach to regulation have been generally lacking. This has led to a lack of deliberate efforts to define the parameters and conditions under which data transportability could be achieved. Also generally lacking has been studies that would document existing commonalities and equivalence of confined field trial (CFT) data to rationalize such an approach to regulation. This paper outlines the principles on which AU-BRF is founded, discusses some examples of data transportability in Africa, identifies some potential barriers, explores opportunities to transport data and existing commonalities in CFT data requirements across Africa and distils policy options in providing guidance to AU member states in the different geographies of the continent.

**Key words:** Africa, data, transportability, harmonization, regulation