

SESSION 6

SITUATION ANALYSIS AND STAKEHOLDERS VIEWS ON GENETICALLY MODIFIED CROPS

THE CASE OF MALAWI

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GOVERNMENT POSITION

Government position is that whatever developments occur in the scientific and technological fields elsewhere will affect Malawi and that the country could not afford to remain behind the GM revolution.

- However, there is need to build capacity to manage and regulate the use of biotechnology.**

- Against this background, a comprehensive Biotechnology Policy is being prepared.**

FARMER ORGANIZATIONS

- According to NASFAM, genetically modified crops would improve yields and resistance to pests and diseases & drought.
- In contrast to NASFAM, Farmers Union of Malawi (FMU) has not taken any position of GM due to varying opinions of its membership.
- One reason why FMU does not have a stand is that GM crops are not a priority since farmers have as yet to realise potential of existing technologies.
- FMU is also cautious of the cost implications of GM technology and their approach is to advocate technologies that are neither inferior nor too advanced

MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT

While the legislators appear to appreciate the likely contribution of GMOs to food security, they are not well informed of the likely health effects of consuming GM food.

- The fear of negative effects also extends to traded commodities especially tobacco.**
- Legislators placed the onus on the scientific community to create public awareness of the effects of GMOs and also to propose strategies of how the country could overcome this dilemma.**

IMPORTERS AND EXPORTERS

- The stand of Importers and Exporters on GM crops is that Malawi should identify a specific zone to commercially exploit this type of technology on pilot basis to avoid contaminating non-GM crops.
- Further, they recommend investment in capacity development to effectively manage and regulate the technology.
- If capacity is not developed, the country is likely to import expensive technology which smallholder farmers may not be able to afford.

INPUT SUPPLIERS

- **Input suppliers consider GM technology unnecessary considering that smallholder farmers have not even reached half the productivity threshold of conventional technologies.**
- **The argument that genetic transformation would confer disease and insect pest resistance and that farmers would reduce cost of production was challenged on the basis that Malawian farmers do not apply any agro-chemicals due to capital constraint.**
- **Another observation made is that GM technology would lead to contamination of the gene pool due to cross pollination between GMO and non-GMO fields.**
- **Citing South Africa, Input Suppliers were quick to observe that fields growing GMO crops are isolated from those growing conventional crops**

CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS

- The position CSOs is that Malawi should not accept GMO
- Although FMU has not taken a stand on GM technology, it is a member of Participatory, Ecological, and Land Use Management (PELUM) that is totally against introduction of GMOs.
- PELUM has over 160 civil society organizations including Botswana, Kenya, Malawi, Lesotho, Rwanda, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe.
- PELUM is calling upon all governments to put in place a moratorium on GMOs until they are proven safe

CONSUMER ASSOCIATIONS

- **The Consumer Association of Malawi (CAMA) is totally against introduction of GMOs in Malawi.**
- **One of the reasons against GMOs is that GM pollen could blow onto the fields of non-GM crops leading to contamination.**
- **Further, CAMA rationalise its position with the argument that some consumers are concerned with food safety, toxins and nutritional changes, allergies, antibiotic resistance, environmental changes that GMOs may bring.**

RESEARCH SCIENTISTS

Research scientists do not appear to have a uniform stand on GM technology.

- The position taken by one group of Scientists is that Malawians have been using GM products for a long time in form of pharmaceuticals such as insulin. However, most users are not aware of the origins of these products.**
- In contrast, another group of scientists proposes a precautionary introduction to genetic modification in agriculture, food and feed.**
- This position hinges around safety, concerns about human and animal health, and the environment.**
- Other issue influencing this stance include intellectual property rights and social concerns.**