

Biotechnology Africa portal to be launched

On Wednesday, June 10, the Biotech Africa portal will be officially launched in Nairobi, Kenya, according to a statement by Dr Margaret Karembu, the director of the International Service for the Acquisition of Agri-biotech Applications (ISAAA), an international organisation that shares agricultural biotechnology, focusing on genetic modification (GM).

ISAAA is headquartered in Nairobi. It supports the development of biotechnology and GM as tools for overcoming the challenges facing agriculture in Africa today, including climate change, malnutrition, and new crop diseases that have no known cure. It shares the benefits of crop biotechnology through knowledge sharing initiatives and support of biotechnology.

The Biotech Africa portal will serve as a regional platform for improving access to credible biotechnology and biosafety information across Africa.

The official launch function will virtually be accessible via a live Webinar for all of us interested, and ISAAA AfriCentre electronically provides the registration guidelines.

Many African countries are still trapped in poverty and hunger because they don't take to new agricultural technologies and innovations that have long been adopted in highly developed countries such as the US, Canada, China, and many others. For example, here in Uganda we have the issue of Banana Bacterial Disease and Nematode infestation that are complicating banana farming.



Michael J. Ssali
Farmer's Say

It is a major food crop and in order to fight malnutrition there is a need to enhance iron and pro-vitamin A in the crop which can be done through biotechnology. We also have the problem of Potato Blight in Irish potato farming,

which takes a lot of agrichemicals to fight. The farmers' profits are reduced by the cost of the pesticides. Rice production is linked to the issue of Nitrogen Use Efficiency, Water use Efficiency and Salt Tolerance, which could be overcome through biotechnology.

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There is stem borer resistance and drought tolerance in maize. Cassava growing is complicated by the Cassava Brown Streak Disease and Cassava Mosaic which are incurable but can be overcome by adoption of Biotechnology (Genetic Modification).

There is another incurable virus disease attacking the sweet potato which is a major food crop in Uganda. A lot of successful research has been conducted by our own scientists in NARO (National Agricultural Research Organization) concerning the crop diseases, but the farmers in the country cannot grow the disease resistant crops because the government is still hesitant to come up with the internationally required law to guide the growth and use of GM crops.