

Technology much needed on farming

The passing of the Biotechnology and Bio-safety Bill by parliament about two months ago has cast a chill over some people and according to media reports; there is an attempt to institute legal proceedings to block GMO technology adoption in Uganda.

Yet this is the technology that the National Agricultural Research Organization (NARO) has recommended as one of the most effective to boost agricultural production in the current circumstances of climate change, crop diseases that have no chemical cure, and dwindling food supplies for a fast growing population.

GMO crops are protected against insect damage and hardly require any pesticide spraying, which makes them safer for human consumption and the environment.

There is no medical or scientific evidence that consumption of GMO food is harmful to humans and livestock. Many GMO food crops actually have specific health benefits.

Farmers stand to increase their profits since they will not lose money buying pesticides. It is one of the most efficient ways of overcoming such crop diseases as Banana Bacterial Wilt, Cassava Brown Streak Disease, Late Blight, and withstanding drought for maize.

GMO technology usage is increasing across the world because of its economic and health benefits. It has banished poverty, food insecurity and malnutrition in many countries. South Africa, Sudan and Burkina Faso have been growing GMO maize, soybean, and cotton for years with lots of benefits to their economies.

The USA which has 72.9 million hectares under GMO crops tops the world in using the technology, according to the International Service for the Acquisition of Agro-Biotech Applications (ISAAA).

Other countries using GMO technology include Brazil, Argentina, Canada, India, Paraguay, Pakistan, China, South Africa, Uruguay, Bolivia, Australia, Philippines, Myanmar, Spain, Sudan, Mexico, Colombia, Vietnam, Honduras, Chile, Portugal, Bangladesh, Costa Rica, Slovakia, and Czech Republic. European Union countries are the largest importers and consumers of GMO crops, according to the Open Forum on Agricultural Biotechnology in Africa (OFAB).

Kenya, Nigeria, Malawi and Mozambique have approved GMO crops. Tanzania, Ghana, Swaziland and Ethiopia among others are working towards establishing their own GMO regulatory laws, as Uganda has done, to start active growing of GMO crops.