GMOs boost crop resistance against diseases

The expected tabling of the National Biotechnology and Biosafety Bill (GMO Bill), seems to have ruffled a few feathers. However, the debate on GMO, however, proved too technical for ordinary Ugandans to follow. Here is a simplified account 'GMO agenda'.

Genetically modified organisms (GMOs) could be defined as organisms whose genetic material or DNA has been altered in a way that does not occur naturally through mating or cross breeding. GMOs are produced due to their perceived benefits to both the producer and the end users. Benefits in agriculture include improved crop protection against diseases and pests, increase yields and improved nutrition value. In medicine, GMOs boost human health with products like insulin and vaccines. GM technology is also used in food processing and environmental protection. Some GMO food crops successfully improved in Uganda are resistant to the awful banana bacterial wilt, cassava brown streak, potato weevil and maize stem borer (ndiwulira). However, all these crop varieties are not readily available to the farmers for lack of an enabling law. Scientists usually apply GMOs where conventional methods have failed. Bananas, for example, are sterile plants meaning they cannot be cross bred.

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