

Role of biotechnology in global food security cannot be dismissed for ideological reasons

Biotechnology sceptics have a right to question the role of biotechnology in global food security. But they are wrong to ignore the growing evidence of the potential contributions the biotechnology and new challenges such as climate change that require new technological responses.

Food security depends on four interrelated factors: quantity of food, which involves increasing agricultural productivity; access to food, which is determined both by income levels and quality of infrastructure; nutrition; and overall stability of the food system, such as resilience to shocks. Genetically-modified (GM) crops or any other breeding methods on their own cannot solve the challenges related to food quality, access to food, nutrition or stability of food systems. But their role cannot be dismissed for ideological reasons.

Africa has been a major focus of the concern that foreign firms are likely to undermine food security through their control of seed technology. However, a recent study, *Planting the Seed of a New Green Revolution for Africa*, shows that the continent's seed sector is dominated by local start-ups, not foreign multinational firms. In fact, local African scientists are at the forefront of using biotechnology to solve local problems. For example, researchers in Uganda are using biotechnology to control the *Xanthomonas* banana wilt. By transferring two genes from green peppers, scientists were able to grow highly resistant bananas.

Emerging nations, including relatively poor nations such as Uganda, have the minimum scientific and technical capacity to engage use biotechnology to solve local problems. But they face major regulatory hurdles imposed by their own governments and championed by external advocacy groups. It is time to follow the growing evidence rather than cling to ideology. In the long run new threats to food security may come from not adopting biotechnology, rather than adopting it.

Read the full, original article: [Feeding Africa: why biotechnology sceptics are wrong to dismiss GM](#)