

GM offers many opportunities to save lives in poorest countries but blocked by unnecessary regulation

I was at the International Consortium of Agricultural Biotechnology Research conference in Kenya. Despite security concerns, about 200 people braved to attend this conference at a resort in Kenya, where about half of were African scholars. The main lesson of the conference was how many new opportunities were introduced but unused because of heavy regulation.

For example, scientists developed a corn variety that has combines drought-tolerant and insect-resistant varieties for use in smallholder farms in sub-Saharan Africa. However, the use of the technology is blocked by restrictive regulations because the patent of the technology is supposedly owned by large corporations although they are allowing its use for free. People complain about Monsanto raking in millions from poor farmers in Africa, but in this case, the technology is given away. I do not see Apple or Samsung doing the same, but many people still benefit from their phones.

A third example is the transgenic variety that is able to address a major disease in regular bananas and plantain-bananas, which are a major staple food for many subsistence farmers in East and Central Africa. Again, these varieties were developed by African scientists and some of these transgenic varieties can also address nematode problems that reduce yields by 20-30 percent. These varieties are currently banned and as a result, they put many lives at risk.

These are but a few examples of how we are missing out on opportunities to address rising challenges in agriculture and food security and the price is paid by the poor. Transgenic technologies are great tools that are given 'by the gods' to develop new varieties. Who will suffer from not using them?

Read the full, original article: [God helps those who help themselves](#)