

Africa 'missed out' on Green Revolution, needs 'growth spark' from biotech

Sub-Saharan Africa's agricultural sector needs to harvest the fruits of biotechnology in order to establish sustainable development, says a report. A key challenge is to attract funding for biotechnology projects on staple crops, such as cassava, it added. These crops were often ignored by commercial funders because they had a limited market, the authors suggested.

Africa missed out on the previous green revolution that boosted food output in many Asian and Latin American nations. The report, *On Trial: GM Crops in Africa*, published by think tank Chatham House, said: "Increasing agricultural productivity and adapting farming to climate change are central to Africa's development prospects." It added that there were opportunities to boost yields and increase resilience by improving existing crop varieties, and that "in some cases, biotechnology, and in particular genetic modification (GM), offers advantages over conventional plant-breeding approaches", such as drought, pest and disease resistance.

However, the continent was in danger of missing out on capitalising on innovations offered by the 21st Century green revolution, just as it had done in the previous century.

"If you look at what happened in Latin America and Asia in the second half of the 20th Century with the Green Revolution, there was a range of technologies, new high-yielding hybrid varieties of wheat, rice and maize, new irrigation platforms, etc," explained co-author Rob Bailey, research director for energy, environment and resources at Chatham House.

"Now, we are in a situation where Africa needs this growth spark in its agricultural sector, because it is primarily where most of the poorest people are, and it makes up a significant share of African GDP," Mr Bailey said. "But they are also in a race against time because climate change is gathering pace because the forecasts suggests that this is going to have a very profound impact on farm productivity."

He explained that the need to increase resilience to forecasts of a changing climate was likely to increase the importance and need for innovation and R&D offered by biotechnology projects.

Read the full, original article: [Africa 'missing out on biotech green revolution'](#)