

## Uganda's GMO products ready for release in 2016 with no law yet in place

In this quest for improved varieties with the capacity to give high yields and other desired attributes such as drought tolerance and disease resistance, one of the technologies which has come into use is modern biotechnology, and Ugandan scientists have not been left out.

Currently, the scientists are developing genetically modified (GM) products at confined field trials. They are testing bananas for resistance to banana bacterial wilt (BBW), black sigatoka, nematodes as well as biofortifying banana with micro-nutrients with iron and Vitamin A.

Other crops under tests include cassava against cassava mosaic virus and cassava brown streak, maize for tolerance in drought conditions, rice varieties that grow in nitrogen-deprived soils, sweet potato against the potato feathery mottle virus, and cotton against bollworm.

However, it is a requirement that for GM products to be rolled out to farmers, there must be an existing biotechnology and biosafety law.

Still at the Bill stage, the law to enforce biotechnology and biosafety is before parliament for debate and is proving to be very controversial with many legislators, mostly arguing against it with hardly any evidence to support their views.

However, scientists who have been conducting research say with or without the law in place, in next two to three years, their products will be ready for release to farmers.

Dr Yona Baguma, deputy director general, NARO, said that by 2016, crops like the transgenic insect-resistant maize and BBW-resistant banana will be ready for release. In 2017, the list will be Bt-maize, stacked with resistance to stem borer and drought tolerance, Vitamin A- and iron-enriched banana, virus-resistant cassava and nitrogen-efficient rice.

**Read full, original article:** [Biotech crops ready for release, no law in place yet](#)