

Producers of 70% of Africa's food, women farmers shackled by GMO opponents

As a farmer in Ghana, I see the problems in farming every day. Farmers struggle with everything from the unpredictability of the weather to the poor condition of the roads. Women are critical to food production, but in many places we lack basic rights to land and can't access loan / credit facilities and agricultural extension services.

Perhaps most important, we need access to modern technology. The 21st-century tools that farmers in the United States and many other advanced countries take for granted remain beyond our reach.

What we really need, however, is to become a part of the "Gene Revolution," the global movement toward the adoption of biotechnology in agriculture.

Only in Burkina Faso, South Africa, and Sudan do farmers enjoy access to these crops, as they have for some time.

We may yet benefit. Ghana and six other African countries have conducted field trials of GM crops, including rice, maize, wheat, sorghum, bananas, cassava, and sweet potato, according to the ISAAA.

Women have the most to gain. Although men dominate work in cash crops, we produce about 70 percent of our food crops. We also add more value to the crops we grow: 80 percent of us turn produce into semi-finished or finished products. We turn fresh cassava into kokonte, dough, and gari, for instance.

Scientists are already trying to develop varieties of cassava that resist diseases and pests, as well as types that are biofortified to enhance nutrition. We must cheer their efforts in every way, and not seek to block them through political interference.

Read full, original article: Rural Women Farmers in Africa can do Better When Given Access to Technology