What Brazil can teach Uganda about GMO crops

Brazil presents a suitable example to learn from in adoption, processing and export of Genetically Modified (GM) crops and products, a cross-section of stakeholders have recommended.

Uganda could emulate the Brazilian model of GM-crops consumption, growth and expansion—as it enacts a law to regulate GM-crops being developed by National Agricultural Research Organisation (Naro).

Dr. James Mutende-Shinyabulo, state minister for industry and technology, Dr Barbara Zawedde-Mugwanya, coordinator, Uganda Biosciences Information Centre (Ubic) and Prof Phinehas Tukamuhabwa, from Makerere University, were part of the Ugandan team that recently visited Brazil on a "seeing-is-believing" benchmarking study tour.

There were delegations from other countries; Kenya, Mozambique, Nigeria, Burkina Faso, as well as Argentina.

Appropriate model

Among GM crops Brazil grows, the herbicide-tolerant soybeans impressed them (African delegations) the most, in terms of involvement of both large and small-scale farmers in its cultivation, the management of weeds, and high yields realised.

Derek Kiberu, a soybean farmer from Luweero District, says Brazil presents an appropriate model for Uganda to study in how small- and large-scale farmers can coexist, access to GM seed, efficient cooperatives and cost-effective production.

"The herbicide-tolerance soya-seed struck me most as it enables farmers to manage weeds, which is one of our biggest challenges in Uganda. In [Parana state, near Londrina city], we witnessed how farmers spray herbicides without having to weed a plantation. They also practice zero-tillage (no-ploughing) to keep soils intact," he said.

Kiberu, a partner in the Luweero-based Vitality Foods and Feeds firm, also noted the extension and credit support that Brazilian government provides to farmers as a major incentive. These, among other things, enable soya farmers reap up to 3.5 metric tonnes per hectare. "This compares miserably with Uganda, where we realise 1.6 metric tonnes per hectare," Kiberu added.

The GLP aggregated and excerpted this blog/article to reflect the diversity of news, opinion and analysis. Read full, original post: Lessons from Brazil on biotech for Africa