

Nigerian scientist: Activists slander benefits of GMOs, hurt poor Africans

The GLP aggregated and excerpted this blog/article to reflect the diversity of news, opinion and analysis.

While there are unproven fears about GMO safety, this technology could decrease the death toll from malnutrition. What is the perception of GMOs in the developing world?

I met with the head plant breeder of the National Root Crops Research Institute, Dr. Chiedozie Egesi who does much of his research in rural Nigeria. The perspective of a scientist working at the front lines was critical. I asked him about perceptions of modern breeding techniques in Africa.

Do you use transgenic technology?

“Our primary research is conventional breeding mixed with molecular breeding (marker assisted selection). We have recently started using transgenic technologies.”

What is the biggest source of resistance that you see towards GM crops in Africa?

“The activist groups who are determined to slander the benefits of science to poor Africans.”

As a plant breeder, have you encountered resistance from the government or activist groups?

“Activist groups... misinform the public by wrongly referring to conventionally bred varieties as GM, scaring people away from using these crops. We can alleviate poverty and improve food security in Africa. We ...have very good intentions for our people. The down side is that we are frequently inundated with questions about GM by concerned citizens.”

Are there any social movements happening in Africa that are in support of GM crops?

“Not yet. But we have the Open Forum on Agricultural Biotechnology (OFAB) to educate people. We would need something like Genetic Literacy Project targeted solely on Africa, targeting areas where there is promise of ag biotech in empowering poor farmers and households economically.”

What is needed to educate African citizens about the benefits of GM crops?

“An informed younger generation can take decisions by themselves. Teach biotech in primary and secondary schools.”

Read full, original post: [An African plant breeder's opinion on GMOs](#)