

Swaziland's cotton industry threatened by GMO cotton ban

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Though agriculture remains a backbone of the country's economy, the cotton industry is threatened by two critical factors.

First, there is the imminent closure of the cotton ginnery stationed at Big Bend, which is under the guardianship of the Swaziland Cotton Board. If the ginnery stops operating, about 90 people will lose jobs.

Also, the industry is threatened by the fact that genetically modified cotton which is now preferred by farmers around the globe is not allowed in the country.

Swaziland Cotton Board Chief Executive Officer Daniel Khumalo said they were confronted by a deficit in cotton production this year. He said as such, the ginnery operated at a loss.

The current reduction in production means the ginnery may not open next season. This season only 1997 farmers planted cotton out of the usual 3,000 farmers, with most waiting for GMO cotton. The ginnery only received 864 metric which was a quarter of its throughput," he noted.

Meanwhile, farmers interviewed during a farmers meeting mentioned that they had been waiting for the GMO cotton for long, but all in vain.

The farmers said the current cotton variety was labour intensive and required manual weeding, when GMO cotton could only be sprayed by round up for weed control. Farmers further highlighted that GMO cotton required minimal sprays compared to the current variety.

Khumalo said the Board had already made an application to the Swaziland Environment Authority (SEA) to allow GMO cotton. The application was still being processed.

The CEO noted that the current Biosafety Act of 2012 was the main hindrance to the introduction of GMO crops in Swaziland. Khumalo said Swaziland needed to review this legislation if the country is interested on benefiting from modern biotechnology.

Read full, original post: [Cotton industry under threat: 90 job losses loom at ginnery](#)