

Tanzania to start confined field trials of drought-resistant GMO maize in 2016

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Tanzania plans to conduct trials for new varieties of genetically modified maize that can survive recurrent droughts and pests.

The confined field trials, to start in April 2016, will be conducted in the semi-arid area of Makutupora in Dodoma to assess the potential of the maize varieties to produce high yields in drought conditions.

Tanzania revised its law on genetically modified organisms, allowing scientists to carry out confined trials on crops such as maize and cassava.

Hussein Mansoor, assistant director of crop research at the Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Co-operatives, said the strict liability clause in the Environment Management Biosafety Regulations has been replaced with the fault-based liability, meaning that anyone claiming compensation for damage would have to prove that whoever introduced the GMOs was at fault. "Scientists can now carry out confined field trials of biotech crops without fear," said Dr Mansoor.

"Contained trials" means that genes and plant material are enclosed within a laboratory or greenhouse while in "confined field trials" they are grown in a specific area, usually a small piece of land set aside for the experiment.

The new clause allows scientists to carry out confined field trials of GM crops to ascertain their effects on humans and the environment, and whether the GM crops can be commercialised.

Drought is the most important constraint to African agricultural production, and its effects are particularly severe on maize, which is the most widely grown staple on the continent.

The UN's Food and Agriculture Organisation recognises biotechnology as a powerful tool in efforts to develop drought-tolerant crops.

Read full, original post: [Tanzania Plans April Trials for GMO Maize Varieties](#)