

Effects of drought in South Africa ameliorated by GMO crops, says industry group

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South Africa's maize crop, scorched this season by a blistering drought, would be in far worse shape if it were not for the country's embrace of genetically-modified (GMO) varieties and new farm technologies, an industry group said on [May 3].

South Africa's Agricultural Biotechnology Industry (ABI) said during the last serious drought in 1991/92, before Africa's biggest maize producer adopted GM crops, the average maize yield was 0.85/tonnes per hectare.

"The 2014/15 and 2015/16 seasons have both been drought years. With the adoption of GM maize the average yield today is estimated at 3.72/tonnes per hectare," it said in a statement.

ABI said without GM varieties and new technologies, South Africa would likely have only produced 1.65 million tonnes of maize this season, and would have needed to import an additional 9.4 million tonnes at an estimated additional cost of 33 billion rand (\$2.30 billion).

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ABI chairman Andrew Bennett said in a presentation that new methods, such as precision farming which uses GPS technology to improve efficiencies, had also contributed to better yields.

ABI also said South Africa will launch a biotech drought tolerant maize, using a gene donated royalty free from Monsanto, for the first time in 2017. It has been tested by smallholder farmers ahead of its roll out and has been approved for use in South Africa.

Read full, original post: [Without GMOs, South African maize yields would be lower -industry group](#)