

Insect-resistant GMO cowpeas speed toward commercialization in Sub-Saharan Africa

Sub-Saharan African farmers will soon have access to improved cowpea varieties that will lead to increases in yield.

This follows the development of Maruca Resistant Cowpeas by a public-private partnership project...
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These varieties are expected to reduce grain yield losses caused by the pod borer, *Maruca vitrata*, as well as reduce the need for insecticidal sprays.

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Considered the most important food grain legume in the dry savannas of tropical Africa where it is grown on more than 12.5 million hectares [almost 31 million acres], Cowpea is said to be rich in quality protein and its energy content almost equal to that of cereal grains.

The legume is a good source of quality fodder for livestock and provides cash income. Nearly 200 million people in Africa presently consume the crop.

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In severe [pod borer] infestations, yield losses of between 70-80 percent have been reported. Control through spraying with insecticide has not been widely adopted by farmers due to its prohibitive costs.

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The project entails transferring the Bt gene, which confers resistance to the pod, into improved cowpea varieties.

The project is being implemented in four countries in Sub-Saharan Africa – Nigeria, Burkina Faso, Ghana, and Malawi.

The GLP aggregated and excerpted this blog/article to reflect the diversity of news, opinion, and analysis. Read full, original post: Scientists target 8m African farmers with Pod-borer resistant cowpea