

Uganda's president declines to sign GMO bill into law

Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni has declined to sign into law a bill on the development and application of genetically modified organisms (GMO) technology in the country.

The National Biotechnology and Biosafety Bill, 2012 seeks to provide a regulatory framework that facilitates the safe development and application of biotechnology, research, development and release of GMOs.

In his December 21 letter to Speaker of Parliament Rebecca Kadaga, President Museveni outlined why he was sending the bill back to parliament to clarify among other issues, its title, patent rights of indigenous farmers and sanctions for scientists who mix GMOs with indigenous crops and animals.



Yoweri Museveni

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Using the new science of genetic engineering, he argues, one may add an additional quality-such as drought resistance, quick maturity, disease resistance, but, "this law apparently talks of giving monopoly of patent rights to its holder and forgets about the communities that developed the original material.

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The president noted that, "to be on the safe side, GMO seeds should never be randomly mixed with our indigenous seeds just in case they turn out to have a problem."

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