

Scientists can save one of Uganda's staple crops with genetic engineering—if lawmakers will let them

Ugandan scientists are accelerating their outreach to lawmakers to make them aware of improved crops like disease-resistant cassava

Cassava, a staple food crop for residents of Eastern and Northern Uganda, has been plagued by cassava brown streak virus (CBSV), a devastating plant disease that destroys the starchy tuber while it's still in the ground In response, scientists began using the tools of modern biotechnology to breed a virus-resistant, nutritionally-enhanced cassava [now] ready for commercialization.

But the nation's biosafety bill, which has been stalled since it was passed by Parliament a year ago, must be in place before the improved cassava can be released to farmers Now scientists think it's better to sensitize local political leaders, who command trust in the communities they deal with on a daily basis, about the benefits of biotechnology.

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Wakiso District Councilor Garmal Abdu confessed that there is a lot of misinformation circulating about genetic engineering But with the facts he received from the scientists, he has come to understand that GMO crops are not bad.

"Previously, people claiming to have knowledge about this technology told us we cannot obtain (GM) seedlings and replant them," he noted. "But now what I know is that once I obtain clean cassava cuttings from my farm, I can still plant them and they will grow. I am going to sensitize farmers about this."

Read full, original article: [Uganda politicians engaged to do farmer outreach around GMO crops](#)