

Uganda proposes 'stop-gap' rules to block GMO crops that could be brought illegally across Kenyan border

The National Environment Management Authority (NEMA), plans to draft regulations that will guide the environmental release of Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs).

Under the revised Act of 2019, NEMA was given the mandate to regulate GMOs in the environment, although the regulations [can't be developed] until the Genetic Engineering Regulatory Act (GERA) that is before parliament is passed into law to give details on the regulatory process.

"In the absence of a specific law for GMO regulation, we should move to draft regulations and guidelines without any further delays, because GMOs are already with us," [said NEMA executive director Dr. Tom Okurut].

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Okurut was backed by the director of regulation and biosafety at the Ministry of Science Technology and Innovations, Dr. James Kasigwa, who seconded NEMA to use the amended act, to regulate GMOs.

"Since we don't have a dedicated law, we can make use of NEMA act to have a stop-gap, because issues of GMO are real," said Kasigwa, who also made reference to Kenya, saying that Kenya plants genetically modified cotton and they are about to release cassava too.

"Our borders are porous, what is in Kenya, will find its way into Uganda. Let us leverage any provisions in NEMA to have anything workable to put in place a regulatory framework," added Kasigwa.

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