

Despite activist opposition, Ghana's scientists seek government approval for GM insect-resistant cowpea

The Savannah Agricultural Research Institute (SARI) has announced it will in November officially request approval from the National Biosafety Authority (NBA) to put genetically modified cowpea variety into the hands of farmers outside confined experimental fields.

The application for environmental release of the Bt cowpea variety which has inherent resistance to pest attacks will be done once an internal review process which is currently ongoing at SARI is completed.

SARI is one of 13 institutes of the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) responsible for the development of improved crop varieties for the benefit of farmers in the northern part of the country and beyond.

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For more than 7 years now, the institute has been working on the genetically modified cowpea (beans) variety, known as the Pod-borer resistant cowpea. It is a variety into which genes which are harmful to the destructive Maruca pests but safe for humans has been introduced through genetic engineering, resulting in a product that can help farmers cut down substantially on the use of pesticides.

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Dr. Issoufou Abdourhamane, West Africa Cowpea Project Manager at the African Agricultural Technology Foundation (AATF) which is a project partner told the media genetically modified crops have proven to be safe for several years and will pose no harm to Ghanaians

"Too bad our countries have become flooded with European NGOs urging us to move against GMOs"

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