Nigeria’s government is taking the bull by the horns and exploring various ways by which the nation can put an end to hunger. For the government, agricultural biotechnology has always been recognized as one of the formidable tools for the revival of food production. This recognition is supported by the fact that Nigeria became the first nation in Africa to commercially release the first transgenic food crop, PBR Cowpea, into the market in 2019, leading the way in advancing food security.

Just 3 years later, the Federal Government of Nigeria is taking another big leap forward with the Varietal Release Committee approving 4 new transgenic maize varieties. Follow the latest news and policy debates on sustainable agriculture, biomedicine, and other ‘disruptive’ innovations. Subscribe to our newsletter.

The new maize varieties are drought tolerant and are resistant to stem-borer and fall armyworm resulting in yield advantage of up to 10 tonnes per hectare under good agronomic practices. The national average for similar hybrids is 6 tonnes per hectare. The varieties are suitable for Rain Forest, Guinea, and Sudan Savannas. Stem-borer reduces maize production in several countries in Africa, while fall armyworm can destroy up to 20 million metric tons of maize in Africa each year, enough to feed 100 million people.

Dr Sylvester Oikeh, the TELA Maize Project Manager celebrated the decision by Nigeria by calling on other countries in Africa to act for farmers. ‘I am encouraged by this decision by the Federal Government of Nigeria that reflects their commitment to the needs of farmers.’

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