

Rwandan scientists are deploying genetic modification to rescue its disease-endangered banana crop

Scientists in Rwanda have made a major breakthrough in fight against banana Panama Diseases through agricultural biotechnology by coming up with genetically modified banana varieties that are resistant to the deadly disease.

According to Athanase Nduwumuremyi, a senior scientist at the Rwanda Agriculture and Animal Resources Development Board (RAB) and coordinator of the Open Forum on Agricultural Biotechnology in Africa (OFAB) in Rwanda, adoption of genetically modified (GM) crops resistant to diseases holds promise in addressing food insecurity and malnutrition.

“There is a hopeful outlook regarding the potential use of GM crops now that parliament has passed legislation permitting their cultivation,” said Nduwumuremyi.

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In December 2023, Rwanda passed a bill governing GMO crops.

Whereas conventional methods typically require over 10 years to develop new crop varieties, GMO biotechnology could accomplish this in just two years, said Nduwumuremyi.

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In May last year, Scientists at Australia’s Queensland University of Technology submitted Australia’s first genetically modified fruit – a Cavendish banana – to regulators for approval saying it is designed to help save the species.

The QCAV-4 banana if approved, it could be the first GM banana to be approved worldwide with potential safety net against the devastating Panama Disease.

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