

## **Ghana to undertake field trials on GM crops**

Ghana will soon begin field trials with Genetically Modified crops, which, when successful, will help enhance agricultural modernization and productivity.

This follows the coming into force of a legislative instrument in May 2008 allowing research into GM crops pending the passage of the Biosafety Bill.

A secretariat is to be set up to ensure the smooth administrative implementation of the field trials.

Professor Walter Alhassan, a Consultant for African Biotechnology and Biosafety Policy Platform, said this at this years press briefing in Accra on Thursday to highlight the current global status of commercialization of biotech crops and Genetically Modified crops.

The briefing, which is done annually, is organised by International Service for the Acquisition of Agri-Biotech Applications (ISAAA), a US registered not for profit NGO.

Prof. Alhassan explained that the LI used the existing CSIR Act 521 of 1996 as a template, since it had provisions for the conduct of research in general, and it was simply to extend this to the conduct of research on Genetically Modified Organisms.

He said, there was the need to speed up the passage of the Biosafety Bill to catch up with the global world and improve agriculture and food security.

Giving the status of Biotechnology and Biosafety in Africa, Prof. Alhassan said Mali, Togo, Malawi, Kenya, Zimbabwe and Cameroon had their legislations in place but were yet to commercialise their production. Ghana, Nigeria, Tanzania and Mozambique have legal frameworks but were yet to commence field trials with GM crops.

He noted that with the current low levels of agricultural productivity, there was the likelihood that Africa would not meet the Millennium Development Goal of halving the number of poor and hungry by 2015.

The report on Global Status of Biotech/GM crops identified challenges in the agriculture sector as low technological deployment, climate change problems, market constraints, low levels of investment in agriculture, conflicts and farming systems.

Biotechnology is one of the tools that can make a meaningful contribution to the challenges facing the continent. Therefore it would be wise for us to embrace this idea to meet the challenges.

For the first time, the accumulated area of biotech crops for the period 1996-2008 exceeded two million hectares.

Out of the 25 countries planting biotech crops, 15 are developing countries and 10 are industrialised countries. Another 30 countries approve import of biotech products for food and feed use.

Egypt, Burkina Faso, Bolivia, Brazil and Australia were the first five countries to commercialise their biotech crops in their countries with the number of biotech crop farmers increasing from 1.3 million to 13.3 million in the 25 biotech crop countries between 1996 and 2008.

The report said the global value of the biotech crop market in 2008 was 7.5 billion US dollars with an accumulated historical milestone value of 50 billion US dollars for the period of 1996-2008.

The report cited case studies in South Africa, China, India and the Philippines where biotech crops have improved the income and quality of life and resourced poor farmers and their families.

GNA

Source: GNA

Story from Modern Ghana News:

<http://www.modernghana.com/news/204204/1/ghana-to-undertake-field-trials-on-gm-crops.html>

Published: Friday, February 27, 2009

All trademarks and copyrights on this page are owned by their respective owners.