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FG approves N40m for cowpea research

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The Federal government has approved N40 million for the 1st phase of research into pest-resistance Cowpea crops in Nigeria. The research which will last between 8 and 12 years has commenced with a confined field trial of insect resistant transgenic cowpea at the Institute for Agricultural Research (IAR), Zaria in line with guidelines by the national biosafety committee.

Principal investigator of the research, Dr.Mohammed Ishiyaka Faguji said during a training workshop for confined trial compliance and communication skill for the Bt Cowpea project last week in Abuja that farmers in Nigeria record about 70-90% reduction in cowpea production annually due to pest infestation.

He said that the genetically engineered research will increase the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of the country "as Nigeria currently accounts for 2.1 million metric tonnes annually which is more than half of total world cowpea production".

Dr. Faguji said that funds for the project implementation will be provided by government in collaboration with donor agencies like the United States Agency for International Development and Rockefeller foundation.

He said that the 2nd phase of the research will be the testing of the transgenic cowpea on target pest in collaborating African countries of Ghana and Burkina Faso.

"The cowpea project will culminate in development of farmer-preferred, adapted high yielding transgenic cowpea varieties which will assist in the growth of the private sector", Dr. Faguji said.

In his remark, regulatory affairs manager of the African Agricultural Technology Foundation (AATF), Mr. Francis Nangayo said that the genetically resistant cowpea will be a major generator of foreign exchange to Nigeria.



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