

Launches Project To Develop Drought-Resistant Corn-Paper	
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Kenya Launches Project To Develop Drought-Resistant Corn-Paper

NAIROBI (Dow Jones)--A project to develop a drought-resistant corn variety has been launched in Kenya, the Daily Nation reported Thursday.

The project, undertaken by African Agricultural Technology Foundation, or AATF, aims to produce a variety in the next 10 years that could increase yields by 20% to 35% under moderate drought, compared with current corn strains.

It will involve researchers from both private and public institutions in Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania and South Africa. They will use "marker-assisted breeding and biotechnology" to develop African corn varieties that will be provided royalty-free to small-scale farmers, the newspaper said on its Web site.

The safety of these corn varieties will be assessed by national authorities according to the regulatory requirements in each of the four countries.

The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation has contributed \$47 million to the project.

Mpoko Bokanga, AATF's executive director, was quoted by the paper as saying that they will work with the non-profit-making international Maize and Wheat Improvement Center; private agricultural company Monsanto Co (MON) and the national agricultural research systems in the participating countries.

Corn is the most widely grown crop in Africa and staple food for over 300 million on the continent. It is however affected by frequent drought in Africa.

Source: George Mwangi, contributing to Dow Jones Newswires; 254 735 781 853; gmwangi91@hotmail.com