

PRESS RELEASE

Productivity & Stress Management; PBR Cowpea

Why Ghana must quickly adopt and release PBR cowpea – Prof Alhassan



(Accra, Nov. 12, 2020) Prof. Walter Alhassan, a former Director General of the Ghana Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) said that the country should quickly adopt and release the Pod Borer Resistant (PBR) cowpea developed by Ghanaian scientists at the Savanna Agricultural Research Institute (SARI) or risk farmers going across the border to obtain seeds from neighboring countries, particularly Nigeria.

Prof. Alhassan who made the call during an interaction with journalists in Accra, Ghana recently, said it was important the authorities look at the PBR cowpea research from SARI and release the crop to farmers based on the laws and regulations of Ghana.

“If we don’t do what is proper now, we will get into a situation where farmers will go and smuggle it into the country and then we are going to be the losers as the farmers will



not come with the technical and agronomic manual on how to plant and address challenges associated with the crop,” he said.

He noted that it was better for the country to adopt their home-grown product than allow farmers to illegally bring in crops and finished products from other countries without the technical knowledge that accompany such crops.

“Getting the PBR cowpea seeds from other countries like Nigeria that has already released it to farmers is not the problem, but the need to be properly educated on the agronomic practices associated with the PBR cowpea is very important,” he added.

Prof. Alhassan, who currently runs the Biotechnology and Stewardship for Sustainable Agriculture in West Africa (BSSA), a non-government organization that provides stewardship on biotech crops in Africa, cited examples of countries in South America where farmers crossed the borders to get genetically modified seedlings for their own use when their nations were delaying the official release.

He said Ghana has all the necessary policies, laws and regulations to facilitate the release of PBR Cowpea including the National Biosafety Authority which has the mandate to regulate genetically modified organisms.

He said that the progress towards adoption of biotech crops in Africa is quite commendable adding that once farmers see the product and what it can do for them, they would do all within their powers to acquire it.

The former Director General noted that Africa must wholeheartedly warm up to crop biotechnology. “This technology has been with us for over two decades and there has not been any report of harm”

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About AATF: (<https://www.aatf-africa.org/about-us/>):

AATF is an African-led not-for-profit organization that is working towards agricultural transformation to address food and nutrition security and generate health and wealth for smallholder farmers through access and delivery of innovative and fitting agricultural technologies. AATF believes that farmers in Africa will become globally competitive through use of the best technology, optimal agricultural practices, strategic product value addition and boosted access to efficient markets within and outside Africa.