



## Policy Brief

# Expedited regulatory pathway for GM crops to support national food security goals.

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## Executive summary:

- Mozambique has been conducting local Confined-Field Trials of imported GM maize in Chokwe Gaza Province since 2023. Due to the current legal framework in place, the seed that has been tested in confined field trials cannot yet be tested in opened fields nor commercialized.
- Although, the current legal framework of Mozambique has evolved to authorize GMO production both for research and product testing. There is a delay in carrying out actions regarding the release of the GMO events into environment leading to unavailability of the GMO seed to producers.
- There is a need to advance the mechanisms behind the authorization to fast release GMO crops to the environment and for market purposes by the National Biosafety Authority within due dates and predictable timelines.
- Fast tracking the authorizing processes in releasing GM crops to the environment will allow not only the researchers to deliver quality seed but also to validate the potential of GMO products. Furthermore, this would, contribute to increasing farmers' productivity considering the current escalation of food insecurity in the country.



## Introduction:

In Mozambique, under the regulations and pillar of the Strategy (PEDSA) of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (Mozambique), the mandate of the Mozambican Agrarian Research Institute is to reduce poverty and guarantee food security. Faced with low crop Productivity among important crops such as maize, low utilization of advanced technologies hampers crop improvement measures. The current legal framework in Mozambique: Decree 71/2014, approves the Biosafety Regulation related to the management of GMOs. The Decree states that: **the GMOs released into the environment will be permitted upon authorization from the National Bio-Safety Authority.** It also states that the National Biosafety Authority will make a decision on the request to release GMOs and their products into the environment and communicate it to the operator within a maximum period of 180 days.

Mozambique has been conducting local confined-field trials of TELA GM maize. Due to the current legal framework in place, the seed tested in confined field trials cannot yet be tested in opened fields nor commercialized. Therefore, there is a need to approach the decision makers and raise awareness on the need to expedite release of GM products release events for commercial release.



## Why is GM technology important?

Crops are the most important cultivated plants globally for food production. In Mozambique, food and nutritional security and income sources are still a challenge for the Government to address. Biotechnological approaches for seed development play a crucial role in the deployment of crops that address food insecurity challenges.

The genetic engineering of crops plays a crucial role in improving their nutritional value, enhancing drought resilience, and increasing resistance to disease-associated stress. Moreover, the introduction of GM technology has been the driving force behind the increase in the yield of crops such as maize and the improvement of its agricultural traits, which overall leads to increased crop productivity, reduced food insecurity and increased farmer's income. In addition, biotech crops cuts pesticides use, and plays a role in increasing crop nutrition and combating climate change.

The slow process of releasing GM products not only has a negative impact, causing discouragement among researchers who are involved in the development of the technology, but more importantly, it delays the availability of the crop in question, whether for consumption or commercialization on the national or international market. Furthermore, it is hindering food and nutritional security and ultimately the well-being and prosperity of families and communities.

## What are the policy recommendations?

The process of developing GM products follows procedures that are time-consuming compared to global best practices- for instance, biotechnology products must be subjected to food, feed, and environmental safety evaluations, prior to being approved as safe for human consumption and cultivation. Other than biosafety factors, there are other factors that influence the speed of adoption of GM crops such as public acceptance and political good will.

The National Authority of Biosafety, which is responsible for giving permission for the release of varieties, should expedite the authorization of GM products by designing internal policies and procedures through which the process of acceptance and permission for the release of GM crops into the environment is not so lengthy or at least there is strict compliance with the time defined in the decree. This way, the country can quickly benefit from GMO crops.



