

GMO MYTHS IN AFRICA



OPEN FORUM ON AGRICULTURAL BIOTECHNOLOGY IN AFRICA



MYTHS

GMOs are large, tasteless and seedless

REALITY

GMOs are developed to solve specific problems like pests and disease or nutrient deficiency. Genetic modification has no impact on size or taste. Seedless fruits normally derive from grafted plants, like citrus, which are not GMOs.



MYTHS

GMOs cannot grow without fertilizers

REALITY

Fertilizers (organic or synthetic) are applied to replenish soil fertility and boost crop growth. All crops require adequate soil nutrient and fertilizer for optimum yields.



MYTHS

GMOs must be sprayed with chemicals to yield well

REALITY

Each genetically modified crop is unique, but none are dependent on chemical sprays to yield well. Some GMO crops can tolerate the application of herbicides to control weeds. Other GMO crops have a built-in resistance to pests or diseases, which reduces or eliminates the need for chemical sprays. Ultimately, the farmer decides whether to spray based on the specific field conditions.



MYTHS

Europe does not consume GMOs

REALITY

Five European countries (Spain, Portugal, Czech Republic, Romania and Slovakia) grow GM crops. All European nations import GM commodity crops, like maize and soy, for livestock feed, as well as processed foods for humans that contain GMO ingredients. European agencies have found no safety issues with GMOs currently under cultivation.



MYTHS

GMOs will replace indigenous varieties

REALITY

The science of biotechnology is being used to protect indigenous crops from drought, salinity, pests and diseases so that they can continue to be grown successfully by small-holder farmers.



MYTHS

GMO crops are foreign and different from what we consume

REALITY

Each nation has its own scientists who are developing genetically modified crops that best meet the needs of their own farmers and consumers. They modify crops that local communities have been growing in order to solve common challenges, like pests and plant diseases.

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MYTHS

GMOs cause diseases

REALITY

There is no evidence anywhere in the world of GMO crops causing diseases or death among humans or livestock. GMOs are the safest foods that have ever been produced because they undergo extensive testing before they are made available to the public. Improper handling of any food can cause illness, so food safety guidelines should always be followed.



MYTHS

GMOs will enslave Africans, making them dependent on seed companies

REALITY

Farmers have always had the freedom to decide what to plant, and that will not change with GMO crops. In most nations, local seed companies manage and sell GMO seeds, so farmers can access seeds the same way they always have. Farmers can also save and share seed from certain GMO crops, while other crops require new seed purchases each year, as with hybrids, to maintain their vigor.



MYTHS

Africa does not need GMOs

REALITY

Africa needs crops that can resist pests and disease, tolerate drought, grow without the extensive use of fertilizer and pesticides, and provide nutritious foods. Africa needs crops that can help small-holder farmers thrive. GMO is a major tool for meeting these needs. So yes, Africa needs GMOs.



MYTHS

GMOs will prevent farmers from selling organic products to the European market

REALITY

Farmers make the choice of what market they want to supply. GMO crops give them another option.



MYTHS

GMO seeds will not be affordable by smallholder farmers

REALITY

In Africa, most crops — both GMO and non-GMO — are developed by public research organizations. These crops typically have no patent, so they can be sold at affordable prices. Most governments and non-governmental organizations in Africa support smallholder farmers and are working to make sure they can afford to buy whatever seeds they choose to plant.



MYTHS

GMOs will make soil infertile

REALITY

Soil infertility is brought about by several factors, including cultivating the same crop on the same land over and over without adding in nutrients; over grazing; erosion. Every crop, whether it's GMO or non-GMO, removes nutrients from the soil. If nutrients are not added, the soil becomes less fertile and is unable to support strong plant growth and good yields. This is true for all forms of agriculture.

