

GM Africa

Algeria: In December 2000, Algeria introduced a ban on the "import, distribution, commercialisation and utilisation of GM plant material".

Mali: The national agricultural research institute (IER) has been negotiating with Monsanto and Syngenta for field trials of Bt cotton.

Burkina Faso: Has been field testing Bt cotton since July 2003.

Senegal: An unofficial field trial of Monsanto's Bt cotton was carried out by the national cotton company, but further efforts were abandoned after the cotton failed to perform.

Benin: In March 2002, Benin announced a moratorium on GM products, but is under constant pressure to introduce Bt cotton. It is also importing food aid from the World Food Programme, which is thought to contain GM maize from the US.

Nigeria: No GM products being developed or field tested as yet, but in July 2003, the government committed \$26 million (N3.2 billion) annually to developing biotechnology to promote food production. In May 2004, USAID committed \$2.1 million to "assist leading Nigerian universities and institutes [including IITA] in the research and development of bio-engineered cowpea and cassava varieties which resist insect and disease pests," and to "improve implementation of biosafety regulations, and enhance public knowledge and acceptance of biotechnology". Nigeria is working on a (no doubt industry-friendly) model biosafety law with South Africa that other African countries could emulate.

Angola: In April 2004, Angola introduced a ban on imports of unmilled GM food aid. The World Food Programme responded by saying that the country would face a significant decrease in the food aid if it continued the ban.

South Africa: Owing to the strong presence of multinational seed companies and strong export-oriented agriculture, it is further down the GM road than any other country on the continent, and sixth biggest producer of GM crops in the world. In 2003, 400,000 ha of GM crops were planted to Bt maize, Roundup Ready soybean and Bt cotton. Nearly all of the GM crops grown in South Africa are sown on large commercial farms, but South Africa is presented as a showcase of the benefits of GM cotton for small farmers, overlooking the fact that the debt problems experienced by small farmers growing Bt cotton are so bad that the firms managing the project withdrew. The country is looking more and more like a dumping ground for GM crops rejected in the US and Europe. There was uproar in Feb 2004 when despite supposedly pulling out of developing GM wheat, Monsanto applied to South Africa for a permit to import it down the road. The country has also just approved field testing of Monsanto's Bt potatoes that were discontinued in the US after consumer rejection. Field trials ongoing on GM cotton, eucalyptus, canola, potato, soybean, strawberries and sugar cane.

Sudan: In May 2003 Sudan banned the import of GM food, but issued a series of temporary waivers enabling food aid shipments to the country to continue while alternatives were found. But the US response was to suspend food aid shipments to Sudan and exert enormous pressure on the government to rescind the ban. The government relented, and ended up extending the waiver for six more months, allowing the distribution of GM food to continue until January 2005.

Egypt: Has a pro-GM policy developed with support from USAID. GM canola has been commercialised, and field trials are underway with GM melon, cucumber, maize, potato, squash, sugar cane, tomato, cotton and wheat. Many others are in experimental stage, including GM bananas being developed with ICARDA.

Kenya: Home of a number of new and proliferating GM-pushing research institutes, including the Africa Harvest Biotech Foundation International, ISAAA's Africentre, the African Agricultural Technology Foundation and the African Biotech Stakeholders Forum. Field trials on GM sweet potato are ongoing, and research on GM maize, cassava and cotton are underway. Undeterred by the failure of Monsanto/KARI's GM sweet potato project (see box on p 19), Syngenta has launched its own showcase project in Kenya on stem-borer resistant maize. Never mind that its' GM maize fails to protect against the most important stem borer in Kenya - the one that affects 80% of the country's maize crop.

Zambia: During 2002, Zambia rejected 27,000 tonnes of GM food aid from the US to feed nearly one quarter of its population following a prolonged drought. It was vilified for doing so but warnings that millions might starve proved unfounded. The Zambian government cited various reasons for its ban - from the possibility of losing export markets to contaminating local varieties of maize to uncertainties about health implications. Zambia is still upholding its ban on importing milled and unmilled GM products.

Malawi: Has had a ban on importing unmilled GM crops since 2002.

Zimbabwe: Ban on importing unmilled GM crops. Monsanto conducted some unsupervised field trials of GM cotton a few years back but that crop was destroyed by the government once they found out.

