

African Contributions to the Workshop on Genetic Engineering and Genetically Modified Organisms

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In Africa, millions of smallholder farmers cannot grow enough food to sustain their families, their communities, or their countries. This leads to recurrent food crises and enhanced difficulties in feeding a growing population. Africa's food crisis calls out for answers. Efforts are currently under way to bring genetic engineering, particularly genetically modified organisms (GMOs), to Africa. The reality is that GMOs are not appropriate for African agricultural systems and will not benefit African farmers. They may cause negative and irreversible environmental impacts, denial of free choice, both for farmers and consumers, violation of farmers' fundamental property rights and endangerment of their economic independence, unacceptable threats to human health, etc.

However, some GMOs have already been released for commercial use and others are used in field trials in some African countries and throughout the world. This means that African organic produce cannot be completely excluded from the risk of GMO contamination.

The IFOAM Africa Office has set up an online discussion forum at the IFOAM Web site to enable African organic stakeholders and others interested to share their opinion and experience about the following issues:

- Does it make sense to declare organic products in Africa GM-free?
- What is undertaken to avoid the contamination of non-GM crops in Africa?
- Do policies around thresholds exist in Africa? Are they necessary in the African context?
- Considering the fact that the majority of African certified organic produce is destined for exports markets, with the vast majority being exported to the European Union, what would be the consequence for the African organic sector if the European organic market imposed mandatory testing for genetic contamination for the verification of organic production?

Participants in the online discussion forum include, for example: IFOAM Contact Point Coordinators—each of them represents a national Organic Agriculture movement or a national or regional organic network—and other African stakeholders involved in the field of Organic Agriculture in Africa.

Two persons from the Organic Movement in Africa will present the outcomes of the discussion during the debates.

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