



Press Release

By

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Enactment of the National Biosafety Act by Parliament

The Government of Uganda announces the enactment of the National Biosafety Act by Parliament. It was previously called The National Biotechnology and Biosafety Bill, 2012 but Parliament has ammended the Title to now be The National Biosafety Act. The Act will facilitate the safe development and application of modern biotechnology.

It is important to note that **Biotechnology** refers to any technique that uses living organisms or substances from living organisms to make or modify a product, improve plant, animal breeds or micro-organisms for specific purposes. **Biosafety** on the other hand means the safe development, transfer, application and utilization of biotechnology and its products.

The Act establishes institutions that shall regulate and promote the safe development and use of biotechnology in Uganda in order to exploit and promote the use of biotechnology and science in modernizing agriculture, environmental protection, enhancing public health and industrialization. The Act will make it possible for Uganda to derive maximum benefit from the potential that modern biotechnology has to offer, while minimizing the risks to the environment and to human health. The Act provides mechanisms to regulate research, development and general release of genetically modified organisms and for related matters.

The Act designates the Ministry of Science Tecnology and Innovation as the National Focal Point and Competent Authority on matters related to Biosafety.

The Act establishes an Inter-Ministerial Policy Committee on Biotechnology and Biosafety Chaired by the Rt Hon Prime Minister and consisting of the Ministers responsible for Science, Technology and Innovation; Health; Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries; Trade and Industry; Environment; Education;; Lands; Security; energy; and Defence. This Committee is responsible for

providing strategic guidance on matters of Biotechnology and Biosafety as well as considering other matters of national interest in relation to Biotechnology and Biosafety.

The Act also establishes the National Biosafety Committee (NBC) consisting of among others; experts with at least ten years experience from the following fields: breeding and genetics, agronomy, pathology, molecular biology, food science, toxicology, ecology, microbiology, pharmacology, soil science, industrial chemistry, veterinary medicine, human medicine and consumer rights.

The full implementation of this law will help:

1. Protect our borders from unauthorised entry of GMOs
1. Protect our people from consuming unsafe biotechnology products
2. Alleviate our farmers from the devastation and impoverishment often caused by crop diseases, animal diseases, uncontrolled use of expensive pesticides and unpredictable weather and drought occasioned by climate change.
3. Give the country opportunities to use all science and technological options including modern biotechnology tools to handle crop and animal diseases and other stresses that cannot be effectively handled by conventional tools.
4. Support our scientists to fully and safely utilize their advanced knowledge and capabilities in biotechnology to help us solve contemporary challenges especially in health, agriculture, industry and environment
5. Unlock the full potential of our economy to create wealth and jobs for our young people as well as shared prosperity for all using all facets of the bio-economy.

The enactment of this law represents a further bold step for Uganda to achieve a middle-income status by 2020 through harnessing the application of science,

technology and innovation. As Government, we consulted widely with all stakeholder groups including scientists, farmers, civil society, religious leaders, and policy makers among others. Most stakeholders echoed the need for this law to be passed by Parliament to ensure safety of Ugandans and contribute to addressing the challenges the Country is facing today, and mitigating those that may come in future.

The Ministry of Science, Technology, and Innovation is proud of the commitment of the President H.E Gen Yoweri Kaguta Museveni who has overtime showed unparalleled, unprecedented and pivotal support to our scientists and Institutions and has often come out publicly to support the passage of this law.

The Ministry of Science, Technology, and Innovation further appreciates the support from the Rt Hon Speaker of Parliament and Members of Parliament (especially members of the Science and Technology Committee) towards the enactment of this important law and advancement of biotechnology in Uganda.

We have put in place provisions as per best practices globally that ensures that modern biotechnology is used in a matter that is safe to humans, animals, biodiversity and the environment.

Finally, I am calling on the relevant Government ministries, departments and agencies, other stakeholders and citizens to recognize the benefits of this law and support its implementation to regulate modern biotechnology for the benefits of Ugandan society, Africa and the global community.

For God and my country

Thank you