

8. What measure has NBA put in place to ensure effective regulation of GMOs at ports of entry around the country?

From the establishment the NBA has been building its capacity. However, for now, the NBA is collaborating with other government agencies in conducting inspections to ensure that all products containing GMOs are in compliance with the Biosafety Act No. 10 of 2007. The Authority is also part of the electronic single window project that will automate permit processing and inspection of imports through the ASYCUDA World platform which will enhance inspection mechanisms and hence compliance with the law.



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**THE NATIONAL BIOSAFETY
AUTHORITY**

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



1. What is Biosafety?

Biosafety is a term used to describe efforts to reduce and eliminate the potential risks resulting from biotechnology and its products.

2. What is the difference between biotechnology and modern biotechnology?

Biotechnology is the application of science and engineering in the direct or indirect use of living organisms, or parts or products of living organisms, in their natural or modified forms. This term is very broad and includes the use of traditional or conventional breeding, as well as more modern techniques such as genetic engineering.

Modern biotechnology distinguishes newer applications of biotechnology, such as genetic engineering and cell fusion from more conventional methods such as breeding, or fermentation. Most often the term "biotechnology" is used interchangeably with "modern biotechnology".

3. What is the difference between a GMO/LMO and GMO/LMO product?

A genetically/living modified organism (GMO/LMO) is any living organism that possesses a new combination of genetic material obtained through the use of modern biotechnology. While processed products containing dead modified organisms or non-living GMO components are known as GMO/LMO products. This would include certain vaccines; drugs; food additives; and many processed foods.

4. What is the difference between hybrid and GMOs?

GMOs and Hybrids are both improved organisms with beneficial characteristics that are produced via genetic engineering or breeding programs. The key difference between GMO and hybrid is that GMO is an organism with modified genetic material through genetic engineering inside the lab while a hybrid is an offspring produced by controlled sexual reproduction between two organisms. The genetic material transferred using genetic engineering can be among similar or unrelated species while in the case of hybrid this can only be done among related species.

5. What are some of the common types of food on the Zambian market which contain GMOs?

At present there are no GMO plants/animals that are being produced in Zambia for the market. Though foods imported from countries that produce GMOs are mostly likely to contain GMO ingredients. World over only the following crops have been genetically modified for introduction onto the market: alfalfa, apple, argentine canola, bean, carnation, chicory, cotton, creeping Bent grass, eggplant, eucalyptus, flax, maize, melon, papaya, potato, rice, rose, soybeans, squash, sugar beet, sugarcane, sweet pepper, tobacco, tomato and wheat. In Zambia none of these GMOs have been permitted for import except for GMO products such as cereals, spices, cooking oils, biscuits and dog food, just to mention but a few.

6. Why are you allowing GMOs in Zambia when you know they are harmful?

The mandate of the NBA is neither to allow nor prevent GMOs from entering the country. The mandate of the NBA enshrined in the Biosafety Act No. 10 of 2007 is to regulate all activities related to GMOs. The NBA evaluates all GMO permit applications made and aims to reduce and eliminate the potential risks resulting from the proposed GMO activity from stakeholders. Each application undergoes a comprehensive risk assessment that will help determine if the proposed activity is too harmful or the harms can be managed.

7. Does Zambia have the capacity to handle the risks associated with the consumption of GMOs, and how will these effects be mitigated?

Since 2002, Zambia has been building on its capacity to regulate, experiment and test GMO related activities. The Biosafety Act provides for issuance of permits for activities involving GMOs that are safe for human and animal health, biodiversity and the environment. Therefore, there should be no concerns about lack of capacity. During the risk assessment all those products that are not safe will not be allowed into the country in the first place. As long as all stakeholders in the biosafety framework are efficient then risks can be managed.