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## PRESS RELEASE

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### **RE: GHANA COMMERCIALISES 14 GENETICALLY MODIFIED EVENTS**

The attention of the National Biosafety Authority has been drawn to some inaccurate media reportage about the NBA's registration of 14 novel GM events in the country. While we appreciate the various concerns raised, the NBA wishes to state that the approved events are not for cultivation. They are for the purposes of food, feed or processing. They have been registered to allow for importation for those purposes by individuals or groups interested in them. Any entity interested will require an import permit from the NBA to be able to import them for use in the country. Therefore, the NBA wishes to state categorically that those events or products have not been imported into the country for food, feed or processing yet.

It is important to note that the NBA as the government agency responsible for the regulation of GM and its related products has laid down procedures in line with Biosafety Act, 2011 (Act 831) and with international best practices in deciding on any application brought before it. The Authority therefore wishes to assure Ghanaians of the safety of GM product(s) that have received the NBA's approval; notably the Bt Cowpea submitted by SARI and the fourteen (14) events submitted by Bayer West-Central Africa S.A and Syngenta South Africa which are intended for food, feed or for processing.

#### **Registered products are not seeds for planting but for food, feed or processing**

The 14 approved products, made up of eight (8) maize and six (6) soybean events it must be emphasized are not intended for cultivation. They are, rather, grains for direct use as food, feed or for processing as stated above. This approval was granted under Section 13 of the Biosafety Act, 2011 (Act 831) and Regulation 15 of the Biosafety (Management of Biotechnology) Regulations, 2019 (LI 2383) following the evaluation of data and information supplied by the applicant and a thorough risk assessment by the NBA Technical Advisory Committee (TAC).

#### **Risk assessment and Findings**

Having received the applications, the Authority evaluated the events in line with available data provided by the applicants as stated above and on the Biosafety Clearing House (BCH), the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Biotrack Product Database and the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) of the United Nations genetically modified food platform to determine the under listed conditions:

- a. Development of the modified events including the molecular biology data that characterize the genetic change,
- b. proximate analyses; major constituents (fats, proteins, carbohydrates) and minor constituents (minerals and vitamins),
- c. composition of, and nutritional information (including anti-nutrients) on the GM products compared to their conventional counterparts).
- d. the potential for causing allergic reactions.
- e. microbiological and chemical safety of the event(s)
- f. the potential for the production of new toxins in the events(s), and,
- g. the potential for any unintended or secondary effects.

The NBA wishes to state categorically that after a thorough risk assessment and evaluation, there were no adverse findings with any demonstrable history of biosafety concerns. For the records, countries like Argentina, Australia, Uruguay, Singapore, Thailand, USA and South Africa among others have already given similar approvals and have confirmed same to be as safe as their conventional counterparts.

#### **Cowpea released on blind side of Ghanaians consumers**

There was enough room for public participation by the public especially farmers in line with Section 42 of the Biosafety Law (Act 831). The Authority also duly published in the Ghana Gazette of June 25, 2021 the Confined Field Trials, and July 26, 2022 Issue 123 the Environmental Release notification. The Daily Graphic edition of Thursday, June 22, 2023 also published the notice of environmental release. There was therefore enough public consultation prior to the approval.

#### **Call to reject GM seeds**

The call to reject any GM seeds that will be supplied is unfortunate. The NBA recognizes the need for Ghanaians to adapt to the emerging plant breeding technologies in the agricultural space for sustained crop improvement and food security. We wish to reiterate the fact that the improved yield and sustained food security will rather inure to the benefits of farmers rather than impoverish them as being speculated by a section of the media. Again, there is a robust biosafety system in place to ensure the safety of GMOs officially released in the country.

The NBA wishes to assure Ghanaians that the Act 831 will be effectively implemented to safeguard the environment and health of Ghanaians. The NBA will continue to monitor for any unapproved GMOs in the country and follow up on the performance of those GMOs already approved in the country.

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