



## **PRESS RELEASE**

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## **NBA CONFISCATES FOOD ITEMS MADE FROM PRODUCTS CONTAINING GENETICALLY MODIFIED ORGANISMS (GMOs) IN LUSAKA**

LUSAKA, ZAMBIA-The National Biosafety Authority (NBA-Zambia) has confiscated food products worth over K 21,000 containing Genetically Modified Organisms which were being sold without permits in some Supermarkets in Lusaka.

The Authority accompanied by officials from the Ministry of Health, Lusaka City Council and the police swung into action and pounced on the unsuspecting chain supermarkets.

NBA Chief Executive Officer Mr. Lackson Tonga said the move was necessitated after the Authority discovered that some of the merchandise which were products of GMO crops were being sold without prior approval of the NBA.

Among the food products confiscated include Choppies instant maize porridge of different flavours, Choppies Corn Flakes and Choppies soups also of different flavours. The goods will be discarded according to the law. However, the similar goods worth millions of kwacha have since been withdrawn from the shelves from all Choppies Supermarkets countrywide until a permit obtained from the Authority for such products to be put back on shelves. And the Authority will subject other samples collected to laboratory tests to ascertain whether or not they contain genetically modified organisms.

The Authority's mandate is to regulate research, development, application, importation, export, transit, contained use, release or placing on the market of any GMO whether intended for use as a pharmaceutical, food, feed or processing, or a product of a GMO. The NBA which was established under the Biosafety Act No. 10 of 2007 also ensures that any activity involving the use or a product of GMO prevents any socio-economic impact or harm to human, animal health and the environment in the country.

Mr. Tonga said according to the Biosafety Act a person shall not research on, develop, produce, import, export, transit, carry out any contained use, release or place on the market any genetically modified organism or any product of a genetically modified organism or deal in any manner with any genetically modified organism or a product of a genetically modified organism without the prior approval of the Authority.

“Any approval or authorisation of the Authority for any activity relating to any genetically modified organism or any product of any genetically modified organism shall be through the issuance of a permit,” Mr. Tonga said.

He explained that about a month ago NBA officials verbally warned Choppies Kabulonga and asked them to follow the right procedure by applying for a permit but they never did and chose to disregard the advice. “Instead the store removed the products from the shelves. The products were clearly labelled to contain GMOs. After some time we noticed that they had placed back the same products on the market, hence our moving in to confiscate these products,” Mr Tonga said.

“It is an offence to research, develop, import or release on the market or make contained use of any GMO or product without any written approval from the Authority. The Act is very clear under the ‘regulation of activities relating to genetically modified organisms’ any person who contravenes Part III subsection (1) commits an offence and is liable, upon conviction, to a fine not exceeding five hundred thousand penalty units or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding ten years or to both.”

He said the Authority will not sit and watch people abrogate the law and bring in products which may contain GMOs and whose risk assessment has not been done. “We are also sending some of the products to the laboratory to ascertain whether or not they contain any GMO or product of GMO,” Mr. Tonga said.

“We would also like to warn all those illegally selling products containing GMOs and do not have permits that we are coming for them. It is better they follow the right procedure and avoid being caught in the web. We are concerned because as per our mandate we have to ensure that any products containing GMOs are safe for human, animal life and the environment.”

And Mr. Tonga called on consumers to be alert and read the contents of a product before purchasing. “Just like most people look out for the expiry dates, they should also be on the lookout for critical information on a product packaging and read what the products they are buying is made off or contains so that they make an informed choice whether to buy such products or not,” Mr Tonga said.

**-Ends-**

## **About NBA**

NBA was established under the Biosafety Act No. 10 of 2007. Through the Act the NBA regulates the research, development, application, importation, export, transit, contained use, release or placing on the market of any GMO whether intended for use as a pharmaceutical, food, feed or processing, or a product of a GMO also to ensure that any activity involving the use or a product of GMO prevents any socio-economic impact or harm to human, animal health and the environment in the country.

Some of the functions of the NBA include processing notifications and applications of GMOs or products of GMOs into the country, in accordance with the requirements of the Biosafety Act, promoting public awareness and education concerning the activities regulated under the Act such as risk assessment, risk management and authorization processes; keeping any GMO or any product of a genetically modified organism under review and to ban its handling or release in Zambia. NBA furthermore, establishes and maintains a database of GMOs and their products as well as making available such information to the public.

For more information about NBA visit: [www.nbazambia.org.zm](http://www.nbazambia.org.zm) you can also follow us on Facebook: NBA-Zambia and twitter: @NBA\_Zambia

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