



**PRESS RELEASE
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WE WILL NOT REVOKE THE RECENTLY GRANTED PERMITS TO IMPORT PRODUCTS THAT MAY CONTAIN GMOS - NBA
As they were issued according to the provisions of the Biosafety Act

LUSAKA- ZAMBIA, THE National Biosafety Authority (NBA) says it cannot revoke the permits it recently granted to four companies because they were issued according to the requirements of the Biosafety Act.

The NBA recently granted Gatbro, Pick n Pay, Southern National Import and Export Limited and Choppies Superstores permits to import products which may contain genetically modified organisms (GMOs).

The decision was arrived at during a Board meeting following a recommendation from the technical experts from various institutions and the Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC) of the NBA. This was after risk assessment was conducted on the products which the companies intend to import.

NBA Chief Executive Officer Mr Lackson Tonga explained that the NBA is a statutory institution mandated by Government to regulate GMOs in the country. He said that the Authority ensures that any genetically modified organism or product of a genetically modified organism intended as food or feed or for processing is imported only after it is subjected to a full risk assessment in accordance with the Biosafety Act.

The Authority ensures that any product of GMO or a product that may contain GMOs undergoes a risk assessment to ensure safety of humans, animals and the environment.

Following calls from some section of the society that the Authority must reverse the permits granted, the NBA would like to state that there is no reasons to revoke the said permits.

Mr Tonga said revoking of permits can only be done if a company or an individual has abrogated some provisions of the Act which calls for permits to be revoked.

According to the Biosafety Act Part III, section 21 (1), the Authority may revoke a permit or subject it to conditions additional to those initially imposed where

(a) the Authority is satisfied that the holder of the permit has failed to comply with any conditions relating to the permit; or

(b) in the opinion of the Authority, new information or a review of the existing information about a genetically modified organisms or any product of a genetically modified organism has established or is likely to establish any risk to human or animal health, non-genetically modified crop, biological diversity or environment.

“As such we have no reason to reverse or revoke the recently granted permits as suggested by some sections of society as the companies are compliant and have not been found wanting,” he said.

He said those calling for the ban of the importation of GMO products should also be aware that this will have an effect on other products made using genetic modification such as medications required by individuals with diabetes, certain vaccines and primers that are used in the medical fraternity.

“All decisions made by the Authority are posted on the Biosafety Clearing House (BCH) which is the United Nations portal. The public is free to check what Zambia and other countries in the world have approved. We also welcome those who want to investigate the Authority on the decisions made,” Mr Tonga said.

However, he reminded the general public that the NBA was established through the Biosafety Act No. 10 of 2007 which was assented to by His Excellency, the late President Mr. Levey Patrick Mwanawasa, on 24 April, 2007.

He further stated that the Authority has been unfairly attacked because some of the sentiments made against the Authority are made without adequate understanding regarding the status of genetically modified organisms in Zambia, and even the mandate of the National Biosafety Authority.

And Mr Tonga said the NBA was saddened to note that most people were speaking against the Authority and its decisions without verifying facts.

“We do understand that a lot of sensitisation and public awareness needs to be done to ensure that the public is enlightened on our mandate. We have been doing this and we will continue doing so.”

“It is important to note that all permits are issued after scientific based evidence and not propaganda. The Authority has not issued any permits to import living modified organisms (LMOs) such as maize grain or soybeans but merely products that were made from maize or soybeans that is genetically modified,” he said.

Mr Tonga however, said that the major reason why such LMOs have not been allowed to be imported or grown was that the Act states that “the Authority shall not grant any approval for the importation, development, production, release into the environment or placing on the market of any genetically modified organism or product of a genetically modified organism relating to any crop or livestock of strategic importance to national food security”.

Mr Tonga reiterated that the Zambian position on GMOs was that they are ALLOWED in the country once the products are found to be safe after a risk assessment. "We are cognisant of the fact that most Zambians still think that GMO products are not allowed in the country as was the case in 2002 when the late President Levy Mwanawasa rejected the GMO maize. At that time, there was no capacity in terms of legal framework, infrastructure and human resource to handle matters relating to GMOs. However, the scenario has changed as there is now the legal framework, a critical of personnel and infrastructure to handle GMOs," he said. Ends

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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/LMO 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:

Website: www.nbazambia.org.zm,

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