

Genetic bananas coming

By Raymond Baguma

UGANDA is to begin trials of genetically modified bananas at Kawanda Agricultural Research Institute.

Dr. Yona Baguma, the head of biotechnology research at the National Agricultural Research Organisation (NARO), said the banana will arrive in the country next week for testing.

He said this on Friday at a workshop organised by the Programme for Biosafety Systems and the Uganda National Council for Science and Technology in Mbarara.

Baguma said the banana wilt and the black singatoka disease had affected the production of the crop.

He added that a Ugandan scientist with a Belgian university were working to offer a solution to the diseases. "NARO and Luven University in Belgium are in the lead of the research.

They (bananas) will be tested in a confined field trial site in Kawanda. We shall use the technology to improve the local banana varieties," Baguma said. Baguma said the country needs a science and technology policy.

He added that the country has the capacity to undertake biotechnology research. "We want the Government to make commitment to invest in biotechnology."

Dr. John Enyaru of Makerere University said biotechnology is equated to Genetically Modified Organisms yet they are only a small part of biotechnology.

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