

## **NATIONAL BIOTECHNOLOGY AND BIOSAFETY POLICY APPROVED BY GOVERNMENT**

The long awaited Uganda National Biotechnology and Biosafety Policy has been approved by the Cabinet after a thorough review and deliberation by various stakeholders. The policy which was formulated by the National Council for Science and Technology (UNCST) in 2002 aims to build and strengthen national capacity in biotechnology through research and development, promote the utilization of biotechnology products and processes as tools for national development ; and provide a regulatory and institutional framework for safe and sustainable biotechnology development and application. During the recent meeting held soon after Policy approval, Hon. Fred Jachan Omach, who presented the Policy to cabinet, underscored the importance of the policy arguing that biotechnology was one of the frontiers of agricultural and industrial research in the world today and that Uganda should not be left behind in these new technological advancements.

The policy's goal towards the safe application of biotechnology will be one of the instruments in poverty eradication, improvement of health care, food security, industrialization and the protection of the environment. Hon. Omach further stated that the approval of the policy was imperative given that the country had already established an ultra-modern National Agricultural Biotechnology Center, where genetic modification of bananas and other crops for resistance to diseases and pests are being conducted under the auspices of the National Agricultural Research Organisation.

Approval of this policy will be followed by the bill to be discussed by stakeholders and debated by parliament. Various approaches will be employed to allow for public participation in this process. Eventually Uganda hopes to have a law as well as regulations that will ensure continued advancement of biotechnology but in a safe and sustainable manner and in line with national priorities.

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