

East and Central Africa Urged To Adopt Modern Biotechnology

Kenya's agriculture minister Kipruto Kirwa has called for rapid adoption of transgenic crops to help fight hunger and poverty in the Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes region. He said this while officially opening a regional biotechnology workshop jointly organized by the African Biotechnology Stakeholders Forum (ABSF) and Kenya Biotechnology Information Center (KBIC) in Nairobi. .

The two-day workshop called to discuss the status of biotechnology policy, research and development in East and Central Africa, brought together over 60 regional fraternity of agricultural research institutions, life sciences industry, communication experts, regulatory agencies, researchers, policy makers, the media, academicians, religious bodies and development experts from Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Ethiopia and Rwanda.

Minister Kirwa decried the low agricultural productivity in the region that had caused huge losses to farmers and the economies of the regional states. He reaffirmed his conviction that modern biotechnology could help to reverse the negative trends that have led to serious food shortages in the region. "Agricultural biotechnology can greatly improve our food security situation and improve our farmers' income," he said.

He urged the regional governments to speed up the process of adopting transgenic crops. But observed that the impact would be greater if the countries shared their experiences and synergies to avoid duplication of efforts.

He called on the participants to create more awareness on the technology and to engage the anti-GMO groups more proactively if the technology was to be widely accepted and adopted.

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