



NEED FOR MORE INTERACTIVE DIALOGUE ON GENETICALLY MODIFIED ORGANISMS ADVOCATED

Feb 21, 2017

ABUJA, NIGERIA -

There has been a consensus on the need for continuous dialogue and consultation among all stakeholders on the potentialities and benefits of Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs); with the primary objective of ensuring the common good of majority of Nigerians.

This consensus was reached by discussants and participants at the recent one-day dialogue workshop between the experts of government agencies responsible for Genetically Modified Organisms programme in the country and experts of the Catholic Church in the country.

The programme was organized by the Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria in collaboration with: the National Biotechnology Development Agency; National Biosafety Mgt. Agency; the Open Forum on Agricultural Biotechnology, Nigeria Chapter and a faith based

Non-Governmental Organization - Action Family Foundation.

Speakers from the Government agencies responsible for research and implementation activities on Genetically Modified organisms advocated the need for the country to embrace the GMOs and be on the same page with the developed countries of the world for better and enhanced productivity and good living.

On the other hand, representatives of the Catholic Church; expatiating on the position of the Church on the scientific feats, identified the dangers inherent in Genetically Modified Organisms, particularly with regards to food production and human intake and called for caution in embracing the development. They also spoke on the ethical and moral impacts of GMOs on the society in relation to the protection of the dignity of the human person and common good of all Nigerians.

After much deliberations by the stakeholders present at the programme, it was agreed that more interactive sessions and consultation should be held among stakeholders before the country embraces the GMOs innovations fully, taking cognizance of the interest of the common good.

The three sessions discussion programme featured: legislation, governance and potential benefits; Health and Ethical Issues about GMOs in Developing Countries like

Nigeria and Potential Impacts and Benefits of GMOs in Nigeria. Speakers included: Dr. Mohammed Yerima, associate Professor of Applied Microbiology and head of Department of Microbiology and Biotechnology, Faculty of Science, Federal University, Dutse, Jigawa State; who gave an Overview of GMOs and Mr Rufus Egbegba, Director –General/Chief Executive Officer, NBMA, whose presentation centred on GMOs in Nigeria: Regulatory Framework and Local content Analysis.

Professor Lucy Ogbadu, DG/CEO, National Biotechnology Development Agency (NABDA), Abuja spoke on Global Status of GMOs; Mr. Mathew Dore, Country Coordinator, Programme for Biosafety. Systems (PBS), Nigeria; whose presentation was The Adoption of GMOs from the African Perspectives in Line with the United Nations and Professor Mohammed Ishiyaku, director, Biotechnology Research, IAR, Zaria and Bt. cowpea Project, Principal Investigator; whose paper was premised on GMOs Experience (Trials) in Nigeria.

The Catholic Church team of experts were: Dr. Patrick Ijewere, Public health Physician & Nutrition Consultant, Lagos; whose presentation was on: GMOs versus Organic foods: Understanding the ABC; Academician Dr. Philip Njemanze of Chidicon Institutes for Advanced Research, Owerri; who made presentation on :Nigerian Inter-Religious Cr. Dr. Ralph Madu PhD, Secretary General Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria (CSN); whose paper

centred on: Ethical Considerations in Introducing GMOs in Nigeria.

Professor Michael Azuzu of the University College Hospital, Ibadan moderated the session of the speakers of the Catholic Church while Dr. Celestine Aguoru, Executive director, Centre for Environment and Biodiversity protection Initiative (CEBPI) and Professor Benjamin Ubi, President, BSN and Professor Emmanuel Kwon-Ndung, President (PBS), moderated the sessions of the speakers of the Government agencies.