

Thème 1 – La Terre dans l'Univers, la vie, l'évolution du vivant

2-B – La plante domestiquée

GMOs and hunger.

In your opinion, should Uganda allow GM crops? Justify your answer with the help of the documents.

Document 1: Will GMOs Help Protect Ugandan Families Against Hunger?

While a few states in the U.S. are debating mandatory labels for genetically modified foods, some African nations are considering a bigger question: Should farmers be allowed to plant genetically modified crops at all?

5 Scientists, farmers and international organizations are pressuring other governments to relax restrictions on the technology. They argue that engineered crops have the potential to alleviate some of the serious threats to food production, from plant diseases to climate change. That's why Uganda is considering allow GM crops, the legislation is currently before parliament. While most Americans rely entirely on the supermarket, some 80 percent of Ugandans grow at least some of their own food, and depend on their own harvests for their livelihood. And so more people are vulnerable when the weather and pests don't cooperate. GM crops might be more reliable than what Ugandans currently plant, especially in bad years, says Calestrous Juma of Harvard University.

10 Take, for instance, bananas. Each Ugandan eats about 1 pound of the fruit per day, on average. "Bananas are the main source of starch¹ in Uganda ... almost every home has banana trees," he says. "They are more important than wheat²." But in the past decade, bacterial wilt³ disease has been cutting banana yields by 30 to 50 percent in some regions of Uganda. There are no pesticides or chemicals to stop the banana disease. But scientists at Uganda's National Agricultural Research Organization have engineered a bacteria-resistant version of the banana by putting a pepper gene into the plant. The scientists want to give away the GM banana for free to millions of Ugandan families. But first, the government needs to pass the GMO law.

20 Bananas can grow from cuttings⁴. So there's little risk of private corporations controlling the seed supplies for GM banana, like they do for corn and soybeans in the U.S. But some Ugandan activists are worried that GM bananas could open the door to a flood of GM crops, including those that require seeds. "Farmers in Uganda are worried about the power to control the seeds," says Ellady Muyambi, an environmental scientist. "Farmers have been told that the GMOs are almost the same as non-GMOs. But they would have to go to a company to buy the seeds. Many farmers can't afford expensive seeds. "

By Michaeleen Doucleff. <http://www.npr.org> (News website), Published June 25, 2013.

1: amidon ; 2 : blé ; 3 : flétrissement ; 4 : boutures.

Document 2: Banana Xanthomonas Wilt

From <http://banana-networks.org>

