



PRESS RELEASE

Kenya National Biosafety Authority Approves Genetically Modified Cassava

NAIROBI, June 22, 2021 – The Kenya National Biosafety Authority (NBA) has approved environmental release of genetically modified (GM) cassava event 4046, resistant to cassava brown streak disease (CBSD). The disease-resistant cassava was developed by the Kenya Agricultural and Livestock Research Organization (KALRO).

Through a decision document dated 18th June 2021, NBA Board approved the Application following necessary review in accordance with the country's Biosafety Act. KALRO scientists have been developing CBSD-resistant cassava varieties using event 4046 under regulated confined field trial conditions authorised by NBA. The approval paves way for conducting national performance trials of these varieties before registration and release to farmers. The approval is valid for five (5) years from the date of authorisation.

According to NBA's Chief Executive Officer, Prof. Dorington Ogoyi, the decision was arrived at following a rigorous and thorough review, taking into account food, feed, and environmental safety assessment as well as consideration of socio-economic issues. The review process also factored public comments for 30 days, in line with the Kenyan constitution that calls for public participation.

This is a welcome decision and a significant step to getting disease-resistant cassava into the hands of Kenyan farmers to address food

security challenges. We thank the NBA and all those who participated in the review for their diligent consideration of the Application.

The approved cassava event 4046 was developed using modern biotechnology and evaluated over a period of five years in confined field trials in three different locations – Mtwapa (Kilifi), Kandara (Murang'a) and Alupe (Busia). It has shown high and stable resistance against CBSD, a disease that can result to 100 percent loss of usable storage roots in severe infection.

The extensive review by the NBA, including input from public consultations and relevant government agencies as mandated by law, confirms that the GM cassava is as safe as conventional varieties for food, feed, and the environment.

The disease-resistant cassava was developed under the Virus Resistant Cassava for Africa Plus (VIRCA Plus) project, a collaborative program between KALRO, the National Crops Resources Research Institute (NaCRRI) of Uganda, and the Donald Danforth Plant Science Center (DDPSC).

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