

## **PRESS STATEMENT: NOV 09, 2022 A CALL TO REINSTATE THE BAN ON GMOs IN KENYA**

*Qur'an Chapter 2:172 "O you who have believed, eat from the good things which we have provided for you and be grateful to Allah if it is [indeed] Him that you worship".*

*Genesis 1: 29 "Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food"*

We, the Religious Leaders from different Counties and representing various faiths, having met in Nairobi from 8th to 9th Nov 2022 are greatly concerned by the recent cabinet's decision to lift the ban on the cultivation, consumption and importation of Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs) in Kenya, which had been in place since 2012.

As religious leaders we defend and protect the sanctity of human life from conception to natural death.

Our concerns are as follows;

### **1. Lack of public participation**

Whereas there was public participation that led to the banning of GMOs in Kenya in 2012, we are highly disappointed that this time round there was no public participation in lifting the ban. The rushed decision to lift the ban on the importation of GMOs into the country lacked public participation in line with the Constitution of Kenya. No public consultations were done and the views of the public were not considered in the decision to lift the ban, which essentially curtails the freedom of Kenyans to choose what they want to eat, or not. Food is a basic human right and any decision on it must be made through proper public participation in line with the Constitution of Kenya.

### **2. Risk of losing our national heritage, culture and livelihoods**

The COK Article 11 stipulates and recognizes culture as the foundation of the nation and as the cumulative civilization of the Kenyan people and nation. Article 11 (3b) calls upon the parliament to enact legislations that recognize and protect the ownership of indigenous seeds and plant varieties, their genetic and diverse characteristics and their use by the communities of Kenya. We are disturbed that the lifting of the GMO ban does not take into consideration the constitutional requirement.

A GMO crop, once released in the open, reproduces via open pollination and interacts genetically with natural varieties of the same crop, producing what is called genetic contamination. According to a study published in Nature, one of the world's leading scientific journals, Bt corn had contaminated indigenous varieties of corn tested in Oaxaca, Mexico. The local farmers will lose their indigenous seeds through this genetic contamination.

Just like GMO seeds and hybrid seeds, replanting GM/Hybrid Seeds cannot be sustained as their productivity decreases from season to the other and therefore farmers will eventually depend on sold seeds hence making the farmers more vulnerable.

### **3. Safety Concerns: GMOs Link to Harmful Synthetic Inputs**



Genetic modification and increased pesticide use go hand-in-hand. Over 99 per cent of all commercialized GM crops are engineered to tolerate one or more herbicides to have an insecticidal effect or both. Some of these inputs such as glyphosate based round up are scientifically known to have adverse negative health effects including their close link to cancer. Numerous court cases are on record in the U.S. as victims pursue justice from cancerous health complications resulting from the Glyphosate based inputs usage.

Equally, Kenyans were never made aware of the findings of the Professor Theuri Committee on the safety and use of GMOs in food in Kenya.

#### **4. The challenges in the agriculture sector are far beyond just introducing GMOS**

While we are aware that there is a current food and hunger crisis in Kenya, the challenges around food security require interventions that are beyond just introducing GMOs. Biotechnology is diverse but we urge uttermost caution as we look at Genetically Engineered crops. However, it is on record that some of the progressive nations have maintained a ban on GMOs owing to its negative implications on the health and livelihoods of their people.

For instance, poor budget allocation to the agriculture sector is a major challenge. Only about 4% of the budget is allocated to the agriculture sector yet it is a mainstay economy for more than 60% of Kenyans! This has limited extension support and general support to the sector at national and County levels.

Secondly, there are different parts of the Country where there is plenty of food yet other Kenyans are dying of hunger. Why can't we address these challenges including investing in farm diversification & indigenous foods which are culturally right and enhance our heritage.

#### **5. Risk of losing organic premium markets**

One of the characteristics of organic foods is food free from GMOs and free from harmful inputs. Kenya relies on agricultural exports for a major share of its foreign earnings. GMOs will put organic agriculture at risk in the Country since contamination will happen and no Country will trust our organic exported crops. This is worrying for our economy bearing in mind that globally there is a growing trend in the demand for organic foods by consumers.

#### **6. Why have other Countries banned GMOs**

We are aware that GM crops are grown in Just 30 Countries around the world out of the 195 countries & by approximately 17 million farmers most of them in developing countries. GMO Crops are banned in Nearly 40 Countries (more than those growing the GMOs) including the following:

- **Europe:** France, Germany, Austria, Greece, Hungary, Netherlands, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxemburg, Bulgaria, Poland, Denmark, Malta, Slovenia, Italy and Croatia
- **Africa:** Algeria, Madagascar
- **Asia:** Turkey, Kyrgyzstan, Bhutan, Saudi Arabia
- **America:** Belize, Ecuador, Peru and Venezuela

Why have these Countries banned GMOS? Is there something they know that we do not know? Why is GMO still a controversial subject?

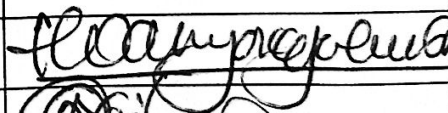
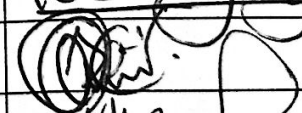

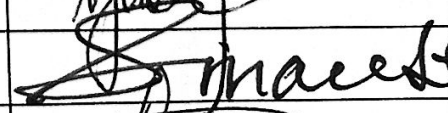
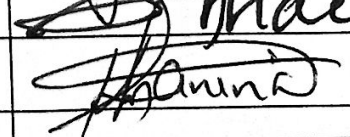
### Our Call to action:

1. We urge that the ban be immediately reinstated and an inclusive public participatory process be instituted to look into long-term and sustainable solutions to issues affecting food insecurity and agricultural productivity in the country.
2. Make public the Professor Thauri committee report and create public awareness on the safety of GMOS rather than pronouncing GMOs concerns as myths
3. We need to protect our local and indigenous seeds and foods as envisaged in Article 11(3)b of the Constitution 2010 and embrace safe and sustainable food production approaches such as organic agriculture
4. Increase budgetary allocations to the agriculture sector while at the same time, addressing the root causes of food insecurity in Kenya.
5. Make deliberate programmes and policies that Invest in climate adaptation mechanisms including water conservation and harvesting
6. Institute clear legal frameworks to check on illegal introduction of GMOs related products into our Country.
7. Put in place mechanisms and frameworks that promote and support patenting of indigenous plant and animal materials.

In conclusion, we urge the government to take note of the above concerns.

*The Bible, Proverbs 22:3 A wise person sees danger and takes precaution but the inexperienced keep going and suffer the consequences.*

### Signed by:

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2. Rev Elias O. Agde	PCEA, NCK	
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