



agriculture, forestry & fisheries

Department:
Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

MEDIA RELEASE

27 AUGUST 2012

The Department of Agriculture, Forestry & Fisheries (DAFF) has noted with concern the media release issued by the Animal Feeds Manufacturers Association (AFMA) dated 23 Aug 2012, in which they sought to explain the reasons for the anticipated rise in food prices.

The department's response is restricted to the claims made regarding the perceived inefficient regulatory framework which governs the use of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) in South Africa.

The AFMA claims that the DAFF's purported inefficiencies are increasing the cost of the industry as one outstanding GMO event is not approved in South Africa thus preventing importation of grain commodities from countries such as Argentina, Brazil and the United States.

The Department wishes to inform industry that the use of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) is governed by the Genetically Modified Organisms Act of 1997. This Act ensures that all GMOs which enter the territory of South Africa are safe for human and animal consumption and not harmful to the South African environment. Consequently, no GMO may be imported into SA unless it is approved for a specific use under the GMO Act.

Globally, the approval status of GMOs differs amongst countries due to regulatory restrictions, the appropriateness of the GMOs for a specific production environment and decisions by technology developers. Traditionally, the US and South Africa were always asynchronous in terms of the number of GMOs ("the GMO events") approved; the US always had more GMO events in production. Mindful that GMO events are not separated during handling processes, imports from countries with which we do not share equal GMO event approvals could result in GMOs entering the South African market, of which we would have no safety information. As a result, grain imports were not allowed from the US.

Until recently, South Africa and Argentina remained synchronous in the number of GM maize events approved. When Argentina approved and started producing an additional GM maize event, an asynchronous situation, similar to the one with US, resulted. In line with the SA legislation, maize imports from Argentina were suspended.

As with all agricultural inputs, the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries does not determine which GMO events are submitted for consideration under the regulatory framework. Given that application for approval of GMO events is a business decision of the technology developers, we have repeatedly (for at least the last ten months) advised AFMA to direct their concerns regarding the potential impact of the asynchrony in GMO approvals to the technology developers. At the moment the state machinery which AFMA considers inefficient cannot do much unless the technology developers submit an application for the assessment of the GMO event which has now caused the asynchrony between Argentina and SA.

The Department cannot abandon its obligation to ensure the responsible use of genetically modified organisms in South Africa leading to the availability of safe food and feed intended for human and animal consumption, respectively.

Issued by Selby Bokaba

Spokesperson for the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries

Tel: 012 319-7948

Mobile: 082 778 0245

Enquiries: Dr Julian Japhta

Director: Genetic Resources

Tel: 012 319 6024

Mobile: 082 395 6150

Enquiries: Julian Japhta

Director: Genetic Resources

Tel: 012 319-6024

Mobile: 082 395 6150