



Current views on GM Trees in Kenya

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Tree biotechnology in Kenya

- The tree biotechnology programme in Kenya started in 1997. The overall goal of the programme was “to apply the technology of propagation of fast-growing multipurpose tree species for distribution to rural communities to increase productivity and alleviate wood product shortages”.
- There are no programmes on genetically modified trees in Kenya. What we have is improved propagation.

The technology being used in Kenya

- There are three biotechnology techniques in use in Kenya: cloning, grafting and production of pure breeds.
- In cloning, a mother tree is selected and its tissue is used to produce tree seedlings.
- In the production of pure breeds, a large area is put under one species to ensure that there is no cross-pollination with other species of the same family.
- In grafting a cutting from one tree is attached to the stem of another tree.

Current situation

- The current situation in Kenya is that clones are being produced from eucalyptus grandis and the giant bamboo - dendrocalamus giganteus.
- Pure breeding is done in South Africa, where seeds of eucalyptus grandis and eucalyptus camaldulensis are produced and exported to Kenya. Therefore, you will hear farmers in Kenya talking about South African trees
- The giant bamboo tissue was imported from China.

A plantation of pure breed eucalyptus grandis



Giant bamboo



Views of various stakeholder groups GM trees in Kenya

- There are five major tree stakeholders in Kenya and they have different views about genetically modified trees.
- Scientists would like to test their knowledge and see GM trees being grown on farms.
- Farmers would be happy to plant GM trees as long as they are assured of good returns, through fast growth and the existence of markets.

Stakeholders' views...

- The wood industry would be happy to have access to trees as there is a shortage of logs in Kenya at the moment.
- The civil society have already succeeded in preventing the introduction of genetically modified crops and would certainly work against genetically modified trees.

Stakeholders' views...

- The government is split into two: government scientists would like to see genetically modified crops and even trees introduced into Kenya. However, the politicians are afraid of the political repercussions of introducing genetically modified trees. They have already suffered “defeat” in the debate on genetically modified crops and would not like to suffer another one.

Future trends

- In the near future, it will not be possible to introduce genetically modified trees in Kenya.
- Kenya's civil society will accept biotechnology, like cloning, pure breeding, and grafting. They will not accept genetically modified trees.