



PRESS RELEASE

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NBA approves HIV vaccine trials *As the Authority issues 39 GMO Permits*

CHILANGA, ZAMBIA-THE National Biosafety Authority (NBA) has approved a clinical trial of an HIV vaccine to be undertaken by the Centre for Health Research in Zambia (CFHRZ).

And the NBA last year granted 39 permits for products which may contain genetically modified organism (GMOs).

The NBA Board during its extra ordinary meeting held last week, approved the vaccine trial permit application for CFHRZ. The experimental medicine vaccine trial will be administered to People Living with HIV (PLWH).

NBA Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Lackson Tonga said the permit granted to CFHRZ is for conducting research trials in Zambia and is valid for three years.

“The Scientific Advisory Committee of the NBA conducted a risk assessment and concluded that the vaccine poses low risks to human health, animals and the environment. The NBA will also monitor the research trial,” he said.

And the NBA last year issued 39 permits for products which may contain GMOs. Of these, seven were for imports while the rest were for placing the GMO products on the market.

In the same period the NBA granted 52 Transit Permits compared to 64 in 2023. About 190,237 metric tons of mealie meal which may contain GMOs transited Zambia in 2024, mostly, to the Democratic Republic of Congo.

The NBA issued 66 non-genetically modified organism certificates to companies exporting various grain commodities.

Mr. Tonga said the NBA also recorded non compliances which led to seizure and destruction of some products which may contain GMOs among these include mealie meal and some soups.

The products found themselves on the Zambia market without prior authorization from the NBA.

“We saw a decrease in the number of new permits granted last year. This could be due to the companies granted import permits the previous year, coming through to only renew permits for placing on the markets. Import permits are valid for five years while the placing on the market is renewed every six months.” he said.

“The National Biosafety Authority intensified on spot checks throughout the country. In the same vein, the Authority collected 152 samples for agriculture produce and products for testing and all were non GMO. We also conducted 20 surveillances of which compliance levels were at 80%.”

And the Authority in its quest to improve compliance services and enhance client service finalized some guidelines.

“We finalized the guidelines on genome editing, stacked genes as well as compliance and enforcement. These will help us enhance regulating activities with GMO and their products.

-Ends-

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About NBA

NBA is a statutory body under the Ministry of Green Economy and Environment. It was established under the Biosafety Act No. 10 of 2007. Through the Act the NBA regulates the research, development, application, importation, export, transit, contained use, release or placing on the market of any GMO/LMO whether intended for use as a pharmaceutical, food, feed or processing, or a product of a GMO also to ensure that any activity involving the use or a product of GMO prevents any socio-economic impact or harm to human, animal health and the environment in the country.

Some of the functions of the NBA include processing notifications and applications of GMOs or products of GMOs into the country, in accordance with the requirements of the Biosafety Act, promoting public awareness and education concerning the activities regulated under the Act such as risk assessment, risk management and authorization processes; keeping any GMO or any product of a genetically modified organism under review and to ban its handling or release in Zambia. NBA furthermore, establishes and maintains a database of GMOs and their products as well as making available such information to the public.

For more information about NBA visit: www.nbazambia.org.zm

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