

AGRICULTURE | Experts argue move has affected research

# Ban on genetic foods is illegal, claim MPs

Minister did not follow the right process on matter, say House teams

BY DENNIS ODUNGA  
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Members of three parliamentary committees have termed as illegal last year's ban on Genetically Modified (GM) food.

And they want the government to apologise for "misleading the public".

Members of the committees on Health, Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries and Education, Science and Technology said the ban, announced last November by former Public Health minister Beth Mugo, was detrimental to research.

Scientists have maintained that the ban was derailing research as some development partners are reluctant to fund projects in countries where GM is outlawed.

The MPs were receiving

submissions by biotechnology experts from universities and research institutions, led by the Director of the Centre for Biotechnology and Bioinformatics, Prof James Ochanda.

The presentation was during a forum in Kisumu that discussed the effects of the ban.

Dr Joel Ochieng, another

## REASONS

### Study that led to decision

**Cancer causing:** Study by French researchers indicated that rats fed on GM maize had developed cancer, implying that people also risk being exposed to cancer should they consume GM foods.

**False claims:** Experts submitted a report by the High Council on Biotechnology to the French government, declaring the study null and void.

expert, took the MPs to task, saying the ban on GMO was misinformed and did not follow the law as it was based on the Public Health Act, and not the Biosafety Act as provided for in the Constitution.

"The National Biosafety Authority (NBA), which is the lead regulatory agency for GM products, has admitted that they were not consulted. They just learnt of it in the media before receiving communication asking them to enforce the order," said Dr Ochieng.

The MPs said the ban was simply an executive order, "not enforceable in law".

The legislators said procedure was not followed as the "purported" ban was not gazetted and thus not legally binding. This is likely to elicit uproar from opponents of GM products.

"The least we expect is for a Cabinet Secretary, Deputy President or the President to publicly confirm that the announcement of the ban was erroneous. We shall take this matter to the floor of the House," said Emuhaya MP Wilbur Otitchilo.

## LOW SALES | Teachers' strike blamed



JOSEPH KANYI | NATION

Mr Anthony Nding'u arranges second-hand gumboots at his stall in Nyeri Town yesterday. Traders are blaming the low business on the ongoing teachers' strike. A pair of boots is selling for between Sh500 and Sh1,500, depending on the size and condition.

## EMBU

# Teacher sent home in sex case probe

BY NATION CORRESPONDENT

A secondary school head teacher in Embu West has been interdicted on allegations of sexually assaulting a student.

The principal received interdiction letter from Teachers Service Commission on Friday after a complaint was lodged by a Form Three student last term.

The student has since dropped out of school after she became pregnant.

## Had been suspended

Embu County TSC director Lillian Mwangi confirmed that the teacher had been suspended pending investigations, but declined to divulge the nature of the accusations.

"It is true that we have interdicted him as per our code of regulations," she said. She said the complaint would be heard in two weeks and the head teacher would be reinstated if found innocent. The interdiction caused uproar in the school after the students learnt about it.

The students stormed out of the institution and demonstrated to TSC offices demanding the teacher's reinstatement.