

Nigeria approves commercial release of GM maize varieties

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The approval was granted by the National Committee on Naming, Registration and Release of Crop Varieties, Livestock Breeds/Fisheries (NCNRRCVLF), headed by Prof Olusoji Olufajo at its 33rd meeting at the National Centre for Genetic Resources and Biotechnology (NACGRAB), Ibadan on January 11, 2024.

The four varieties approved by the NVRC are SAMMAZ 72T, SAMMAZ 73T, SAMMAZ 74T, and SAMMAZ 75T.

The new maize varieties are drought tolerant and are resistant to stem-borer and fall armyworms, resulting in a yield advantage of up to 10 tons per hectare under good agronomic practices. The national average for similar hybrids is six tons per hectare.

Development of the improved varieties was led by the Institute for Agricultural Research (IAR) Samaru, Ahmadu Bello University Zaria, through the TELA Maize Public-Private Partnership coordinated by AATF. The TELA Maize Project is being implemented in Ethiopia, Kenya, Mozambique, Nigeria, and South Africa.

Prof Ado Yusuf, Executive Director of IAR, expressed satisfaction with releasing the four new maize varieties, saying, "IAR is very proud of our scientists who are addressing the maize productivity challenges in the country and beyond. These varieties have undergone thorough research and developed using biotechnology tools over several years of continuous testing and revalidation."

Dr Canisius Kanangire, AATF's Executive Director, said: "The release of TELA Maize in Nigeria will contribute to food and nutrition security in line with the Federal Government's Agricultural Transformation agenda. AATF reaffirms unwavering commitment to addressing challenges farmers face across the continent."

The other partners in the TELA Maize project are national agricultural research institutes in Kenya, Mozambique, Ethiopia, and South Africa; the International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center (CIMMYT) and Bayer, with funding from Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and United States Agency for International Development (USAID).