



**Open Letter of Appreciation to the President of the
Republic of Uganda
from the Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa
31 August, 2019**

Your Excellency,

On behalf of the millions of African smallholder farmers, fisher folk, pastoralists, hunter-gatherers and consumers, we the undersigned take this opportunity to express our appreciation for your continued and strong stand on the Genetic Engineering Regulatory Act (GERA).

We recognize and assure you that the concerns you raise that *“the issue of GMOs and genetic modification of our seeds and livestock touches not only on Science but Agriculture, Ecology, Food & National Security and, indeed, the sovereignty of our nation”* are valid.

You have added your voice to a rising tide of concern about Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs) in other countries within and beyond Africa. The government of Zimbabwe, recently declared its continued stand against introducing GMOs in their country with a major concern on their impact on the environment. The government of the Republic of Kenya has also continued to maintain its ban on any importation of GMOs, and Burkina Faso is yet to recover from the GM Cotton fiasco that has caused insurmountable losses to farmers.

We particularly recognize and bring attention to the following issues in your letter to Parliament:

Strict Liability which will protect peasant farmers by ensuring that: *“manufacturers, inventors and introducers of genetic modified or engineered products must ensure that their products are safe and as such, accept strict liability in case the product does cause harm.”*

Use of Glyphosate. It is common knowledge that farmers in Uganda and other parts of the continent **continue to use glyphosate**, therefore, *“the need to protect fertile soils from chemical contamination,”* is a welcome call in the right direction.

The call **“to proceed with caution” on GE technology** including *“gene editing and other modern biotechnology methods which are still the subject of much debate around the world.”* We recognize that Africa is gradually being introduced to new and untested biotechnologies involving gene editing and gene silencing. This is a real threat in countries like South Africa and Nigeria.

The concern that “*the commercial interests promoting genetic engineering need to be balanced against the need to protect the ordinary Ugandan Citizen from real and potential harm. Health and wellbeing rather than profit, must be our primary concern.*”

AFSA doesn't take the struggle against GE lightly; your stand has renewed our strength and commitment to protect, conserve and safeguard Africa's agricultural sector from selfish economic interests.

Our firmly held expectation is that the Parliament of Uganda will heed your strong words of caution, and make the necessary changes you recommend to the Genetic Engineering Regulatory Act 2018 for the protection of the environment and the wellbeing of Ugandans and African citizens at large.

We also urge leaders and lawmakers across the continent to take heed, and provide regulatory frameworks that protect and serve the interests of their people.

AFSA www.afsafrica.org is a broad alliance of civil society actors who are part of the struggle for food sovereignty and agroecology in Africa. It is a network of networks, currently with 37 members active in 50 African countries. These include African food producer networks, African NGO networks, indigenous people's organizations, faith based organizations, women and youth groups, consumer movements, and international organizations that support the stance of the alliance.

