

# Kenya 'effectively' lifts ban on genetically modified crops

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Kenya's new president says the Cabinet has "effectively" lifted the country's ban on openly cultivating genetically modified crops, reversing a decade-old decision as the East African country struggles with food security and a deadly drought.

"Open cultivation and importation of White (GMO) Maize is now authorized," the presidency statement said Monday, after years of

concerns in Kenya and much of the African continent over the safety of genetically modified foods.

Earlier this year, the United States via its trade representative's office criticized Kenya over its ban and the effects on U.S. [agricultural exports](#) to East Africa's commercial hub. The ban also affected food aid, the office asserted in its [annual report](#) published in March.

U.S. Trade Rep. Katherine Tai led the U.S. delegation to Ruto's inauguration last month and noted the new president's support for shared "regional priorities" including enhancing two-way trade.

The Cabinet was meeting to discuss the drought that affects 23 of Kenya's 47 counties and strategies for longer-term [food security](#) in the country of more than 50 million people. It discussed "significantly redefining agriculture in Kenya by adopting crops that are resistant to pests and disease" and considered reports on the "adoption of biotechnology," the presidency said.

Agriculture is a main driver of Kenya's economy, and about 70% of the rural workforce is in farming. Ruto, a former agriculture minister, seeks greater agricultural productivity.

Many African countries have bans on genetically modified agriculture, amid concerns about potentially harmful effects on smallholder farms, existing crops, the environment and people's long-term health.

The presidency statement noted that Kenya's Cabinet in 2019 made a limited step by approving the commercialization of a genetically enhanced variety of cotton to resist the African bollworm pest.

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