

Kenyan court dismisses challenge over GM crops

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Agriculture is the biggest single contributor to Kenya's economy.

A Kenyan court on Thursday dismissed a lawsuit challenging a government decision to allow the importation and cultivation of genetically modified crops to help combat its food crisis.

In October last year, the government lifted a decade-old ban on GM crops in response to dwindling food security following the worst drought to ravage the Horn of Africa region in 40 years.

The Law Society of Kenya (LSK) swiftly launched a [court challenge](#), arguing the decision was unconstitutional as there were concerns over the safety of the crops.

But environment court judge Oscar Angote ruled on Thursday that there was no evidence to show any harm to nature or [human health](#).

"As a country, we need to trust the institutions that we have in place and call them to order when they breach the law," Angote said, making reference to government bodies that regulate GM foods.

"We should be confident that our health is in good hands."

An official from LSK told AFP there had not been a decision on whether to appeal the ruling.

Another case against GM crops filed by Paul Mwangi, a lawyer who is close to the opposition, is still active in court.

Kenya, like many other African nations, banned GM crops over health and safety concerns and to protect smallholder farms, which account for the vast majority of rural agricultural producers in the country.

However, the East African powerhouse faced criticism over the ban, including from the United States, which is a major producer of GM crops.

Activists and agriculture lobby groups have protested over the lifting of the ban, saying it opened the market to US farmers using sophisticated

technologies and highly subsidized farming that threatened the livelihoods of small-scale farmers.

Agriculture is the biggest single contributor to Kenya's economy, generating more than 21 percent of [gross domestic product](#) (GDP) last year, according to government figures.

The [agricultural sector](#) employs about 12 percent of Kenya's 19 million workers, behind the education sector and manufacturing.

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