

USA GMO maize imports to put SA farmers at disadvantage

Grain SA took notice of the approval by the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (DAFF) of commodity clearance of some GMO events in maize that are currently not available to South African farmers. Grain SA also took notice that USA maize (white and yellow) can still not be imported into South Africa as there are still more GMO approvals to be considered by Minister Zokwana.



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“Market reports circulated by role-players in the industry indicating that USA maize can now be imported by South Africa are deceptive and are seen as attempts to influence local maize prices,” Jannie de Villiers, CEO of Grain SA, said. The current volatility in the market is not good for anybody except speculators. Traders earlier confirmed that enough white maize has already been secured to meet the 2016/17 shortages in South Africa.

There are plenty of supplies of maize in the world and any approval of GMO's not available to the South African farmers put them at a disadvantage. “If there were no other maize (other than that from the USA) available, we would have understood the pressure from traders and buyers, but to give the USA farmers an inside lane seems unfair,” De Villiers said. There are also concerns about monitoring “commodity clearance” maize for spillages and the blending with local maize during storage.

The USA is normally the first country where new technologies are registered. They then seek approval for exports of these events in other countries. If these events do not get registered for general release in these countries, their local producers are competing on an uneven playing field against the USA, given the technology development. “We are not just competing against our American counterparts having access to better technology, but they are also getting huge subsidies from their government,” De Villiers said.

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