

# GMO Facility Launched at Kawanda

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Owing to completion of a Biosafety Containment Green house at the National Agricultural Biotechnology Centre, the National Agricultural Research Laboratories Institute, Kawanda, now has the capacity to carry out contained trials of genetically modified (GM) crops.

The centre, nationally famous for its production of improved hybrids, received the green house from the contractor, Victor Construction Ltd, through NARO (National Agricultural Research Organization)- Uganda's leading Public Agricultural Research Organization on Friday 22 June 2007 at Kawanda. The facility was officially opened by Prof. J. Opuda-Asibo, the chairman of the National Biosafety Committee.

The director of the research institute, Dr. Mathias Magunda, during the handover ceremony said that the greenhouse is a containment and experimentation facility for GM plants, to check their disease and pest resistance, before they are sent to the field. The research center is now able to move genetically enhanced plants from purely laboratory-based experimentation to contained greenhouse evaluations.

“The green house will improve the production of the biotechnology inputs for future provision of food locally as well internationally, by export. This will also go a long way to improve people's economies and, on the whole, the country's economy,” Magunda said.

The USAID-funded (US\$ 320m) facility will add to NARO's capacity to move further in its agricultural biotechnology research and development efforts.

The facility comprises of an anteroom, where laboratory workers change into protective or lab clothing, the preparation room where the plants are cleaned and potted and the growth area where plants will be monitored.

The greenhouse uses computerized, state-of-the-art technology, part of which is an automatic temperature regulation system. It has an automated opening roof and a thermo-screen, both of which regulate the heat to appropriate levels required for the crops' proper growth. This climate control system is connected to misters and irrigators in the growth room, which irrigate or mist the plants automatically according to the weather.

While at the moment the greenhouse will be used to experiment on the crops' resistance to disease/pests, in future, more research will be carried out on crops that are nutrition enhanced.