USDA Foreign Agricultural Service
GAIN Report
Global Agricultural Information Network

Voluntary _ Public

Date: 6/13/2018
GAIN Report Number: ET1823

Ethiopia

Post: Addis Ababa

Ethiopia Approves Biotech Cotton

Report Categories:
Biotechnology - GE Plants and Animals
Cotton and Products

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Report Highlights:
In May, the Ethiopian Ministry of Environment approved Bt cotton – the country's first biotech crop – for cultivation. Planting is expected to start next year since the seed is not expected to be available in time for the current growing season. At the same time, the Environment Ministry has authorized confined field trials for drought-tolerant and insect-resistant maize.

General Information:
In May, the Ethiopian Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change (MEFCC) approved two Bt cotton hybrids (JKCH1050 and JKCH1947) for cultivation. This regulatory decision comes after two rounds of confined field trials, analysis of the field trial results, and prior deliberations. In last weekend's news, the Director of MEFCC's Biotech Directorate was quoted, as saying the government has "confirmed that the cotton is safe for the environment, ecosystem, and human health."

Bt cotton is the country's first crop to be reviewed and approved for planting. Planting is expected to start next year since the seed is unlikely to be available in time for the current growing season.

The Ethiopian government has been pursuing the approval of Bt cotton for several years in hopes of improving cotton yields to meet the growing demands of the country's growing textile and apparel sector. More details about Ethiopia's cotton sector can be found in ET1801.

Meantime, MEFCC recently granted permission to the Ag Ministry's Institute of Ag Research (EIAR) to carry out confined field trials for drought-tolerant and insect-resistant maize. Preparations are underway to start these trials.