AN ETHICAL EVALUATION OF THE ZAMBIAN GOVERNMENT'S DECISION ON GENETICALLY MODIFIED MAIZE

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This study is an ethical evaluation of theZambian government's position on genetically modified (GM) maize which was exported to Zambia by the United States of America (USA) through the World Food Programme as food aid.This followedfood shortages after the country experienced partial droughts in 2001/2002 agriculture season, which led to widespread crop failure, hunger and vulnerability. After consultations with relevant groups, the Zambian government decided against the use of GM maize because of the potential harm to humans and the environment that was associated with it that called for caution in dealing with the issue.

The study applied five ethical approaches in evaluating the decision of the government, namely, the common good, the right to safe food, the dignity of human life, the autonomy of every nation, and the justice/fairness approach. Informed consent and the precautionary principle were also applied.

The objective of the study was to review the debate regarding the Zambian government's position on the donated GM maize by the US government.

The methodology involved qualitative methods with an ethical component. Primary data was collected through formal and informal interviews with relevant members of society and higher institutions of learning. Secondary data was collected through relevant literature from books and the print media.

The major findings of the study include the fact that the USA government did not seek Zambia's permission before exporting the GM maize to Zambia and that GM maize would carry undue risks to human health and the environment.

The ethical evaluation concluded that the government was justified in banning GM maize.

It was recommended that proven conventional plant breeding methods to develop varieties of crops with resistance/tolerance to biotic and abiotic stresses should be promoted.