

Bishops in Kenya take new stance on genetically modified foods

by [Fredrick Nzwili](#)

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Nairobi, Kenya, August 1 (ENInews)--Roman Catholic bishops in Kenya told people to eat genetically modified foods to check starvation amid a serious drought in the Horn of Africa.

The bishops spoke in response to opposition from some non-governmental organizations and legislators to a government plan to import genetically modified maize from South Africa.

"We are in favor of non-genetically-modified foods, but if there is a crisis and they can resurrect the person for one week, eat them," said Archbishop Zacchaeus Okoth of Kisumu, who chairs the Justice and Peace Commission of the Kenya Episcopal Conference.

Okoth said the drought and food insecurity threatened the lives of many Kenyans. This had been worsened by the rising price of basic foods, the deteriorating condition of livestock, and high rates of inflation, he said.

Groups opposed to importing foods made with genetically modified organisms (GMOs) argue they may harm people's health. But Professor Shaukat Shabairo, head of the National Council of Science and Technology, said the foods could help improve the situation.

"If you are being faced with a calamity and there are no options to explore, GMOs would be a viable source," said Shabairo.

The UN says nearly 2.9 million Kenyans need food aid due to the drought caused by failed rains.

"It is sin for somebody to die in Kenya of hunger. It is total neglect on the part of the government," said Bishop Cornelius Korir.