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## Genetically Modified Foods: Assessment of University Scholars’ Awareness and Implications for Food Security in Nigeria

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### Abstract

Genetically modified foods (GMFs) are products of genetically modified crops and animals whose DNA have been modified, using genetic engineering techniques mostly targeted at introducing special traits to them which do not occur naturally in the species. GMFs are on the increase for consumption in most countries with some countries producing them while some countries only approve them for importation due to public uncertainty or further government restrictions. Both food scientists and members of the public have varying opinions on GMFs as potentials for food security and safety in developing countries of the world, where food for the teeming population is a serious challenge. The controversies surrounding GMFs in terms of their benefits and otherwise for food security and safety have prompted the Nigerian Government to have separate regulatory agencies to handle approval for their cultivation, marketing and human consumption. The agencies include the National Agricultural Seed Council, National Agency for Food Drug Administration and Control, National Biotechnology Development Agency and the National Biosafety Management Agency. Researchers have also stepped up further findings into the merits and demerits of GMFs and their suitability for ensuring food security and safety. It is in view of this, that the study was conducted to assess university scholars’ awareness of GMFs and implications for food security in Nigeria. The study made use of a multi-stage sampling technique to select one hundred and eighty (180) university scholars in seven (7) Nigerian universities across three States (Lagos, Oyo and Ondo) and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT). Data for the study were collected with the aid of structured questionnaire assisted with interview schedules. Data collected were analysed using empirical statistical models. This paper analysed Nigerian university scholars’ awareness of GMFs and implications against the four (4) pillars of food security including availability, access, utilisation and stability. The study further examined GMFs in relations to their economic profitability, environmental friendliness, poverty alleviation potentials, malnutrition and hunger and their health risks. The study concluded that GMFs may not be the ultimate panacea for food insecurity in an emerging economy like Nigeria.

**Keywords:** Awareness, emerging economy, food security, genetic engineering, GMFs, university scholars