

Knowledge and public perception on GM maize vary among different nations and are thought to be affected by income, education and gender among other social demographic factors. The present study was conducted to assess knowledge and public perception on GM maize by ordinary Kenyans and professionals. Two different questionnaires, one for the ordinary Kenyans and the second for the professionals were designed to generate both a demographic profile of the respondents and their knowledge and perception. Data was collected in Dagoretti market, University of Nairobi, Upper Kabete Campus (CA VS) and the National Biosafety Authority, Gigiri. The number of ordinary Kenyans in Dagoretti market was 96, number of professional in University of Nairobi was 15 and 15 respondents from National Biosafety Authority that were systematically and randomly selected.

The results indicated that the knowledge of the ordinary Kenyans was low with an average of 30.1% compared to professionals who had an average knowledge of 49.1 %. There was generally a high positive public perception; professional had 54.5% while ordinary Kenyans had 49%. Consequently there was a low negative perception; ordinary Kenyans had 19.8% and professionals 18.2%. There was no significant association between education, gender and income on either knowledge or public perception. There was also a significant association between trading (occupation) and knowledge on GM maize in ordinary Kenyans.

It is concluded that Kenyans still have low knowledge of GM foods. However even with the low knowledge there is generally a high and positive attitude towards GM foods with more than 75% of the respondents being positive. Subsequently a very low proportion of the surveyed population was aware of the government policies and regulations on GM foods. Knowledge dissemination about GM foods may be an approach to increase knowledge and alter public opinion in favor of GM foods. A countrywide survey covering varied geographical areas and more social demographics attributes with a bigger sample size would provide more precise assessment of knowledge and perception for Kenya public.