Stakeholders in the agriculture and food chain system were recently sensitised on the impact of bio-technology food productivity at the University campus, Brikama.

The event also attracted students pursuing agriculture at The Gambia College and the media. Agricultural biotechnology holds great promise to boost food production in both the developed and the developing world by reducing agricultural vulnerability to pests, viruses, and drought. It is also view as an important tool in the world’s quest to combat food insecurity and malnutrition.

Professor Dr. Paulo Paes de Andrade of Federal University of Pernambuco (UFPE), an expert in GMOs, who is the guest speaker, said the outreach programme is designed to promote Genetically Modified Crops GMOs solution for food productivity, improved yields, enhanced nutritional value, longer shelf life, and resistance to drought, frost, or insect pests.

While citing corn varieties containing a gene for a bacterial pesticide that kills larval pests, as examples of GM crops, Professor Paes de Andrade revealed that food Bio- Tech was adopted since 1996 and today USA is the lead with 75 million hectares followed by Brazil, Argentina, Canada and India.

‘It has contributed to food security, sustainability and climate change’.

The use of biotechnology, he said, should be a food risk assessment as new products are added for almost every human activity and respect prior on ideological basis.

“Science should be the basis of safety assessment. Every hazard coming from our heads should be considered and weighted using an adequate approach. Risk assessment agencies around the world and the science academics should be trusted, not internet as organisation in the world is making fault claims on Biotechnology, he further claims that scientist s has claim the other way round.”
He added: “The way to promote of biotechnology should be a political will; other countries there are against biotechnology there is no political to empower it,” he concluded.

Abubacarr Jallow, Principal of Gambia College, said he is not that sure whether GMOs are the best alternatives for The Gambia, as he is skeptical on GMOs have an intensive training on its effects on small scale farming. The biotechnology he added, increase crop resistance on diseases and climate resistance; it's a concern as we are in an era where climate change is a concern especially on agricultural productivity.

“There are a lot of benefits to GMOs and there are people who spoke about the disadvantages, and as a developing country The Gambia is not fully ready to implement the use of Bio- Tech. There is a need of full acquired of knowledge on the GMOs to earnest the benefit, because if farmers are not able handle the crops it will fail and agriculture should be in large scale.”

He added that marginalized people voices must be respected because scientists deal with researches, adding that as far as the scientific evidence are concerns, the social perspective should be concerned.

“Communities in India, Brazil are suffering and having protest in the use of GMO. Poor farming abandons the low cost seeds and goes for high cost seeds it’s not beneficial to them.”

He raised concerns that the national multimillion companies should give the seeds free of charge for the benefit for the marginalized, noting that food production in the Gambia small scale farming is more productive than large scale farming.

“For commercial production large scale farming is beneficially as commercial production is limited to few people in the agricultural industries in the expense of the masses,” he added.
Stakeholders sensitised on impact of biotech food