Kenya has marked a significant milestone in agricultural safety with the launch of Africa’s first ISO-certified personal protective clothing designed specifically for crop protection.

This new line of protective gear is a collaborative effort involving the Pest Control Products Board (PCPB), the International Center for PPE (ICPPE) at the University of Maryland Eastern Shore, BASF, and Syngenta. It aims to enhance safety standards for farmers and promote a culture of responsible pesticide use across the country.

The newly launched protective garments are designed to be both comfortable and cost-effective, addressing a critical need for farmers who handle potentially hazardous crop protection products. The initiative is grounded in the feedback of over 110 Kenyan farmers who participated in a wear study, providing insights into the comfort, durability, and design of the PPE. This input has been instrumental in ensuring that the new gear meets the practical needs of those who use it daily.

Fredrick N. Muchiri, CEO of the Pest Control Products Board in Kenya, emphasized the importance of adhering to safety measures when handling pesticides. “Handling and using pesticides should be done with adherence to safety measures, among them effective use of PPE. As a board entrusted with regulating pest control products in the country, we remain committed to ensuring the PPEs used in our country meet the right standards, are affordable, and are available in our markets,” he said.

The new protective clothing, certified under KS ISO 27065 C1, has been designed to balance protection and comfort, particularly in tropical climates where heat stress can deter the use of traditional protective gear.

Anugrah Shaw, coordinator of the ICPPE Initiative, highlighted the challenge, stating, “One of the challenges with users not wearing appropriate protective clothing is due to heat stress and comfort. Our approach with the new ISO-certified garment is to balance protection and comfort.”

The certification ensures that the protective gear meets stringent international standards, offering reliable protection to farmers and re-entry workers who handle crop protection solutions. The garments are made from breathable, reusable textile materials that have been rigorously tested to perform effectively under the

conditions faced by Kenyan farmers.

According to a farmer representative, Ambrose Kirobi, PPE is vital to sustainable farmer productivity. Farmers who use PPE correctly are motivated to carry out farming activities, they deliver better output. Creating more awareness on the correct PPE to use remains a fundamental goal for all agricultural stakeholders.

Industry leaders have expressed their commitment to promoting the use of these protective garments as part of broader efforts to ensure sustainable farming practices.

Gift Mbaya, Country Cluster Head and Head of Agriculture Solutions at BASF East Africa Ltd, stated, “By investing in personal protective clothing, we are not only protecting the health and safety of our farmers and the communities in which we operate. We are committed to ensuring a sustainable and responsible future for the world around us.”

Similarly, Given Mudenda, Business Area Head for East and Southern Africa at Syngenta, underscored the importance of providing farmers with quality protective gear. “At Syngenta, we are committed to the safety of farmers and farm workers. Every farmer deserves access to quality protective gear, enabling them to work sustainably,” he said.

The launch of this ISO-certified protective clothing is expected to have a profound impact on the agricultural sector in Kenya, fostering a stronger culture of safety and responsibility. As adoption of the gear increases, it is anticipated that more farmers will embrace safer practices, contributing to the long-term sustainability of Kenyan agriculture and the wellbeing of farming communities.