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Rice Food
Safety & Other Facts

Newsletter
Nr. 45
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FOOD SAFETY

Rapid Alert System Notifications for Food

date	notification type	notified by	subject
25/08/2015	information for follow-up	NETHERLANDS	sushi rice from France infested with insects (rice weevil, *Sitophilus oryzae*)
14/09/2015	border rejection	ITALY	chlorpyrifos-methyl (0.93 mg/kg - ppm) in rice from India
15/09/2015	information for follow-up	GERMANY	unauthorised genetically modified (tNOS + BT-rice+Bt63) organic riceflour from Pakistan, via Italy
25/09/2015	information for follow-up	UNITED KINGDOM	metal fragments in Italian round grain rice and Selenio sushi rice from Italy
06/10/2015	alert	GERMANY	aflatoxins (B1 = 3.64 µg/kg - ppb) in basmati rice from Itay

Source: //ec.europa.eu/food/food/rapidalert/rasff_portal_database_en.htm

GMO & BIOTECH

Italy has sent the European Commission a request for exclusion of the whole country from the **cultivation of all GMOs** authorized at European level. The request was made in implementation of the new European Directive 2015/412 of 11 March 2015, which allows Member States to prohibit domestic cultivation of genetically modified organisms. The number of countries that have submitted a similar demand has risen to 19. On the contrary at the beginning of September the EU Parliament agriculture committee rejected the draft law that would give member states the power to restrict or prohibit the **use of EU-approved GM food or feed** on their territory. It fears that arbitrary national bans could distort competition on the EU's single market and jeopardise the Union's food production sectors which are heavily dependent on imports of GM feed.

Source: www.politicheagricole.it, www.europarl.europa.eu/news

ORGANIC FOOD, PDO, PGI

- It took place on October 12th the **World Assembly of geographical indications at Expo Milano 2015**. The convention, which saw the participation of institutions, associations, representatives of indications from all over the world, has had as its central theme the role of geographical indications in creating a model of sustainable development internationally. In his introduction to the day the Minister of Agriculture, Maurizio Martina, highlighted the fact that through the instrument of "geographical mark", you can create added value for the benefit of producers, rural areas and territories' origin, creating virtuous mechanisms of integration of supply chains. In developing countries, for example, this system has already been proven to work, creating employment opportunities and promoting the formation of new organizational models.

Source: www.agi.it

- According to figures released by SINAB, the National System of Information on Organic Farming, the **surfaces organically grown in Italy in 2014 reached 1.4 million hectares** with share growth of more than 5.4% compared to last year. A growth in terms not only of surface but also of the subjects involved: the certified operators are now 55,433 (+ 5.8% compared to 2013), 42,546 of which are farmers.

Source: www.sinab.it

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SCIENCE & RESEARCH

A team of scientists from the University of California and the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) recently published a study unlocking the secret to just **how rice seeds might be able to survive when grown under water**. The study, published in the leading scientific journal *Nature Plants*, identified a gene that controls the availability of sugar to a growing seed shoot—especially when under flooded conditions. The gene identified—the AG1 gene—helps the seed to germinate and grow into a young plant allowing energy reserves that are in the seed to be efficiently moved to the growing shoot, even when the entire process occurs underwater. This process is opposite of that regulated by the SUB1A gene - that was discovered previously - that enables rice plants to survive complete submergence. Plants with SUB1A essentially hibernate when they are underwater; a situation where energy reserves are safeguarded. AG1 creates an 'all or nothing' escape mechanism that tricks the seed into thinking that more sugar should be given to its shoot so that the seed underwater is able to more quickly grow and reach the surface of the water. The mechanism can work up to a water depth of 10 cm and can get 'activated' as soon as the seed is sown underwater. One thing that was noticed is that the modern *Indica* varieties, which are the ones mostly grown in the tropical parts of Asia, are very much lacking in the trait or ability to grow under flooded conditions, but in *Japonica*, grown in the more temperate regions all over the world, the trait is present. AG1 works well on moderate stress conditions. When it is combined with the SUB1A gene in the same genetic backgrounds it works well, although they have opposing mechanisms. In severe stress conditions, however, AG1 alone is not sufficient—additional quantitative trait loci (QTLs) or genes that complement the AG1 mechanism will be needed. IRRI and partner universities are working hard in that direction.

Source: //ucrtoday.ucr.edu/31472

OTHER NEWS

The Council for Agricultural Science and Technology (CAST) – USA released a paper titled ***Process labels can effectively bridge the informational gap between producers and consumers***, which presents a systematic review of present food process labels and their impact on food and agricultural sector. According to the paper, process labels - such as Certified Organic, Fair Trade, and Free of Genetically Modified Organisms - help consumers to be better-informed and set realistic expectations about the quality of the products in the market. At the root of this phenomenon are the desires for individual control and a diffuse distrust in the safety and health of the food produced by modern agriculture. These desires are paired with concerns about the ethical, social, and environmental consequences of food production. These "process labels" can effectively bridge the informational gap between producers and consumers, satisfy consumer demand for broader and more stringent quality assurance criteria, and ultimately create value for both consumers and producers.

Source: www.cast-science.org

LAWS, STANDARDS & AGREEMENTS

On 13th October the Agriculture Committee of the EU Parliament published its opinion on the **proposed new Regulation on organic farming**. Among the objectives of the Parliament, the most important are: strict controls (annual, risk-based and throughout the supply chain), precautionary measures instead of specific thresholds for pesticides, boosting EU production (strictly regulated mixed farms and group certification), ensuring imports comply with EU standards.

Source: www.europarl.europa.eu/news