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## Rice Food Safety & other Facts

Newsletter Nr. 8

30<sup>th</sup> Jan 2009

### FOOD SAFETY

#### - Rapid Alert System

Following official control on the market or at the EU borders, notifications were sent on by:

- Finland concerning unauthorised genetically modified (Bt 63 rice) rice vermicelli from China (Hong Kong).
- Greece concerning aflatoxins in rice from Pakistan.
- Italy concerning melamine in rice chilli crackers from China.

Source: *RASFF weekly Overview*

- The efforts of USA Rice Federation in the last two years has yielded significant successes: recently completed testing of the 2008 crop demonstrates that 99.9 percent of the samples contained no Liberty Link (**LLRICE601**) traits. The development and adoption of the industry's voluntary Seed Plan have effectively reduced the presence of Liberty Link rice and all stakeholders are encouraged to adhere to provisions of the Seed Plan this year. That is considered to be critical to the competitiveness and marketability of U.S. rice at home and abroad.

Source: [www.usarice.com](http://www.usarice.com)

### ORGANIC FOOD

Despite the economic crisis Italian families continue to buy organic products: Italians' current habits when it comes to organic food is described in the **2009 report published by Bio Bank**, which gathers data from over 7,000 players in the organic sector. The development of direct relations between producers and consumers is dominant in Italy's organic world. Consumers want to know the origin, the production processes and the history of the food they buy. On the other hand organic companies are looking for a more direct, stable and gainful channel, as well as for a network that allows the smallest producers to survive.

Source: [www.greenplanet.net](http://www.greenplanet.net)

### GMO & BIOTECH

To address some concerns about the expansion of genetically engineered crops to outdoor plantings and potential impacts on the human food supply, scientists from the USDA determined whether **commercial agriculture seeds of several species including rice** are digested or pass viably through the digestive tract, or are transported externally, by **farmland birds**. The seeds did not pass through the digestive tract of these bird species, the birds nonetheless did retain viable seeds in the esophagus. Moreover birds externally transported seeds away from the feeding location, but in only four instances were seeds found attached to their muddy feet or legs and in no case to feathers. Risk of such crop seeds germinating, establishing and reproducing off site after transport by a bird will depend greatly on the crop and bird species, location, environmental conditions (including soil characteristics), timing, and seed condition.

Source: *Environ. Biosafety Res.* 7 (2008) 241-252



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### SCIENCE & RESEARCH

International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) has received an \$11-million grant to develop a new rice strain that uses less water and fertilizer and yields up to 50 percent more in production terms. Known as the **"C4" rice project**, the money comes from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. Scientists are optimistic that boosting rice productivity is crucial to achieving long-term food security. Various groups worldwide started research on this several years earlier. At present, the focus is to try to understand how evolution alters the gene to produce an improved photosynthesis in C4 plants, like maize, and apply the technology in C3 plants, like rice. The whole project has a roadmap of about 15 years, at the end of it the hope is to have a functioning C4 rice, but it requires to make major anatomical and biochemical modifications.

Source: [beta.irri.org/news](http://beta.irri.org/news)

### LAWS, STANDARDS & AGREEMENTS

The **Commission Reg. (EC) No No. 41/2009** has recently been published in the OJ L16, concerning the composition and labelling of foodstuffs suitable for people intolerant to gluten. The labelling, advertising and presentation of foodstuffs for people intolerant to gluten, shall bear the term **'very low gluten'** if the gluten content does not exceed 20 mg/kg, and shall bear the term **'gluten-free'** if the gluten content does not exceed 20 mg/kg in the food as sold to the final consumer.

Source: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu>

### OTHER NEWS

- **The International Centre for Advanced Mediterranean Agronomic Studies (CIHEAM) and FAO** will strengthen their cooperation under an agreement recently signed. In it, both organizations agreed to intensify their partnership in the areas of traditional foods, the protection of forests, the modernization of irrigation techniques and the management of plant diseases and quarantine. For the biennium 2009-10, the two organizations will undertake research programmes and organize workshops and the exchange of scientists and students to promote local, mountain and quality agricultural and food products that often contribute to the sustainability of mountainous and less-favoured areas.

Source: [www.ciheam.org](http://www.ciheam.org)

- **European Group on Ethics (EGE)** asks European Commission to embed **ethical principles in agriculture policies**. In the opinion adopted in December, the goals of (1) food security, (2) food safety and (3) sustainability are considered to be the first priorities and guiding principles to which any technology in agriculture must adhere.

Source: UE, Rapid press release (IP-09-86)

### EVENTS & MEETINGS

- **World Grains Trade Summit** – Singapore, February 17/18 2009. The theme for this 2-day event is "How is the regional business evolving amid volatile supplies & changing climate?" Key issues to be covered will include global grains market outlook & where is it heading; can the biofuels mandate roll back with rising food prices?; agriculture policy & investment outlook; will the center of commodity exchange shift to Asia?; commodity price risk management; freight markets & impact on grains movement.

Source: [beta.irri.org/news](http://beta.irri.org/news)