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Rice Food

Safety & other Facts

Newsletter Nr. 10

2nd March 2009

FOOD SAFETY

Rapid Alert System

On 18th February two notifications were sent by:
- Germany concerning unauthorised genetically modified (Bt 63) rice macaroni from China;
- Ireland concerning unauthorised genetically modified (Bt 63) rice flour from China (Hong Kong.

Source: www.efsa.europa.eu

EFSA has launched a **public consultation** on draft guidelines relating to "**active and intelligent substances**" to be used in materials made to come into contact with food. The guidelines specify what type of information should be provided by industry to enable EFSA to carry out safety assessments in line with new EU legislation. In general terms, active food contact materials or articles either absorb or release substances in order to extend the shelf-life or improve the condition of packaged food. Intelligent food contact materials or articles monitor the condition and/or the quality of packaged food or the surrounding environment. Interested parties can comment on the draft guidelines via the EFSA website up until 22 April 2009. An EU-wide list of substances which can be used in the manufacture of such materials will be drawn up under new EU legislation which is due to enter into force in the coming months.

Source: www.efsa.europa.eu

GMO & BIOTECH

Biotechnology companies are keeping university scientists in the U.S. from fully researching the effectiveness and environmental impact of the industry's genetically modified (GM) crops, according to "**an unusual complaint" issued by a group of those scientists**. For growing the crops for research purposes researchers must obtain permission from the seed companies, and sometimes that permission is denied, or the company insists on reviewing any findings before they can be published. The scientists who authored the complaint are 26 corn-insect specialists. They withheld their names because they feared being cut off from research by the companies. What is "striking" is that the scientists, who are mainly from U.S. universities with big agricultural programs, say they are not opposed to GM technology. Rather the industry's "chokehold" on research means that they cannot supply some information to farmers about how best to grow the crops and the data being provided to government regulators is being "unduly limited".

Source: The New York Times

ORGANIC FOOD

"**Organic food and farming: building fresh success on a stronger legal foundation**": this was the subject of the speech made by Commissioner for Agriculture Mariann Fischer Boel at Biofach 2009. According to the Commissioner is necessary to follow through with the various initiatives launched under the Action Plan for Organic Food and Farming, which includes the promotion campaign. It's essential to get clear messages across to consumers so that they can rely on products which claim to be "organic" and which come from other countries in the European Union (and from outside it). This is why a new European organic logo is important. The sector is facing challenges, but it's also making progress on many fronts: know-how is advancing, long-term demand is growing, and the European legislation has been recently rebuilt.

Source: http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleases

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SCIENCE & RESEARCH

Scientists from Canada have found a group of **genes in rice** that enables a yield of up to 100 percent more in **severe drought conditions**. The researchers measured the effect of a previously reported, large-effect quantitative trait locus (QTL) on grain yield and associated traits in 21 field trials. QTLs are regions in the DNA that are associated with particular phenotypic traits. The team found that the relative effect of the QTL on grain yield increased with increasing intensity of drought stress, from having no effect under well-watered conditions to having an additive effect of more than 40 percent of the trial mean in the most severe stress treatments. The genes seem to stimulate the rice plants to develop deeper roots, enabling it to access more of the water stored in the soil.

Source: Crop Biotech Update

OTHER NEWS

Grosser and Associates of New York have recently pubblished the 2009 edition of the **Guide to U.S. food labelling requisites**, aimed at European companies intent on exporting foods to the USA. The Guide offers useful information for tackling the commercial, legal or marketing-related issues that may crop up in business between European and U.S. firms.

Source: AgraNews I28307

Dow AgroSciences LLC announced that it has signed a research partnership with the China Rice Research Institute (CRRI) to study **new technologies in rice production**. The partnership will bring together Dow's platform of traits and technologies and CRRI's leading rice germplasm.
On a separate note, Syngenta announced that it has agreed an eight-year research collaboration with the Anhui Rice Research Institute (ARRI) of China's Anhui Academy of Agricultural Sciences. The partnership will focus on drought tolerance and nitrogen utilization optimization in key crops such as corn and soybean using **rice as a model crop**. Rice is highly suited for gene research: it is a well characterized crop regarding genetic, molecular and agronomic information and its genome is closely related to those of major crops such as corn. The relatively short growing cycle of rice will also allow more testing to be completed in a shorter time frame.

Source: Crop Biotech Update

EVENTS & MEETINGS

Rice Utilization Workshop - New Orleans, March 12-13**.** The 2009 edition of the Workshop will continue the theme of "Beneath the Hull: Exploiting the Health Beneficial Properties of the Rice Grain" by focusing on how two important components, rice starch and protein, may help further the goal of improving human health. An action plan will be developed for researchers and all segments of the industry to partner for advancing research to promote the health beneficial properties of rice starch and protein.

Source: www.usarice.com