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Rice Food Safety & other Facts

Newsletter Nr. 11

16th March 2009

FOOD SAFETY

Rapid Alert System

- On 25th February a notification was sent by Lithuania concerning aflatoxins in broken rice from Pakistan;
- In Austria official control following RASFF notification have found unauthorised genetically modified (Bt63) rice noodles from China via the Netherlands.

Source: www.efsa.europa.eu

EFSA has recently published its scientific opinion on **nanoscience and nanotechnologies** in relation to food and feed safety. EFSA's Scientific Committee (SC) has concluded that established international approaches to risk assessment can also be applied to engineered nano materials (ENM) and that a case-by-case approach would be necessary. Current data limitations and a lack of validated test methodologies could make risk assessment of specific nano products very difficult and subject to a high degree of uncertainty. The EFSA SC recommends that additional research is needed to investigate the interaction and stability of ENMs in food and feed, in the gastro-intestinal tract and in biological tissues, to develop and validate routine methods to detect, characterise and quantify ENMs in food contact materials, food and feed, to develop, improve and validate test methodologies to assess toxicity of ENMs.

Source: www.efsa.europa.eu

GMO & BIOTECH

There is a type of genetic modification, called **cisgenesis**, that should be more acceptable to environmentalists and consumers because the genes being used come from the crop plant itself or from a sexually compatible donor plant that could also be used in traditional plant breeding. The big advantages of cisgenesis are that it is a much quicker process than cross breeding; when breeding for pest resistance several resistant genes can be used, making the breakdown of resistance unlikely; and the genes can be inserted into the genomes of good-quality, established varieties, so no lengthy cross breeding is required to get commercially acceptable varieties. Conventional breeding for durable resistance causes unwanted introgression of genes coding for toxic compounds. In case of cisgenesis, only the resistance genes are inserted into the cultivars, without the unwanted genes for toxicity. However there is a potential problem in getting a cisgenesis variety approved by the EU Commission for commercial production. This is because EU laws do not differentiate between transgenic and cisgenic varieties and to get a GM variety approved is very time-consuming. Faster and cheaper approval will allow to use cisgenesis for a variety of crops, therefore leading to a wider agro-biodiversity in Europe and thus to a more sustainable agriculture.

Source: www.cisgenesis.com

ORGANIC FOOD

In the website of **International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements** (IFOAM) the Member Directory 2009 is now available, it contains the contact details and other relevant information, such as key fields of activities, of all IFOAM Member Organizations and Associates. The Directory reflects the situation as of December 2008 with the most up to date information including many new email and website addresses. The contact details of the IFOAM Members and Associates are complemented with their logo, symbol or trademark.

Source: www.ifoam.org



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SCIENCE & RESEARCH

Scientists from University of Parma have recently developed **allergen detection systems in food**. Since DNA is quite stable to physical and chemical food processing treatments, DNA-based tests were used which proved to be very useful to authenticate the species used in foodstuffs production. The detection systems involve both optimized DNA extraction methods from seeds, fruits, vegetables and derived food matrices of different plant species.

Source: *Proceedings of "X Congresso nazionale biotecnologie"- Perugia, 17-19 September 2008*

LAWS, STANDARDS & AGREEMENTS

In the OJ L44 the **Commission Directive 2009/10/EC** of 13 February 2009 has recently been published, amending Directive 2008/84/EC laying down specific purity criteria on food additives other than colours and sweeteners.

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

OTHER NEWS

-In the framework of the **Conference on Agricultural Quality Policy**, held on 12th and 13th March in Prague, the European Commission published the summary of the 560 stakeholder opinions submitted in response to the Green Paper on agricultural product quality policy. The response to the Green paper was highly satisfactory: 560 individuals and organisations responded, this illustrates the considerable interest in quality products and labelling and certification schemes. These responses will now be used in the preparation of the Commission Communication on quality policy, due for publication in May, which will set the strategic direction for the policy.

Source: <http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/newsroom/en/328.htm>

- Experimental trials are expected to start soon at CNR in Florence concerning the use of agroindustry waste (as rice residue left over after harvest and milling) to produce energy thanks to the pyrolysis process. The **pyrolysis** is a process that has the ability to produce a clean, high calorific value gas from a wide variety of waste and biomass streams burnt at low temperatures (280–500 °C) and restricted oxygen supply; the by-product of pyrolysis is **biochar**, incompletely burned organic matter with high levels of nutrient concentrations, high nutrient- and moisture-holding capacity, and lower acidity. Addition of biochar to soils increases nutrient availability and boosts nutrient and moisture holding capacity.

Source: *Il sole 24 ore*

EVENTS & MEETINGS

3rd International IUPAC Symposium on Trace Elements in Food – Rome, 1-3 April 2009. All aspects of trace elements in relation to food will be addressed including toxicity, bioavailability, sources and transfer in food chain, effect of processing, legislation and standards. Special emphasis will be placed on biological effects of dietary trace elements.

Source: www.iss.it