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Rice Food
Safety & Other Facts

Newsletter Nr. 16

20th Oct 2009

FOOD SAFETY

Rapid Alert System

- A notification was sent by United Kingdom concerning aflatoxins (B1 = 32; Tot. = 37 mg/kg - ppm) in roasted red rice flour from Canada.

Source: www.efsa.europa.eu

At the beginning of October five members of EFSA GMO Panel and EFSA scientific officers met with **NGO representatives** of Global 2000/Friends of the Earth and Greenpeace. The meeting was held to discuss genetically modified organisms (GMOs) as part of its commitment to hold a regular open dialog with concerned stakeholders. EFSA presented its work on GMO risk assessment including actions arising from the December 2008 conclusions from the Environmental Council. The meeting focused on issues related to GM maize Mon810, GM rice (LLRice 62), as well as EFSA's review of long-term environmental risk assessment and environmental impacts of herbicide tolerant GM crops.

Source: www.efsa.europa.eu

ORGANIC FOOD

On the occasion of the **World Food Day**, agro-industry proposes a second green revolution based on genetic engineering. According to IFOAM (International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements), this suits their interests but does not contribute to feeding the poor. Organic Agriculture proposes a paradigm-shift in food security policies to ensure that hunger is history by 2050. Organic Agriculture puts the needs of rural people and the sustainable use of natural resources at the centre of the farming system. And in response to a frequently asked question IFOAM says that the world can be fed by the worldwide adoption of Organic Agriculture: the lower yields of Organic Agriculture in favorable, temperate zones are compensated with higher yields in difficult environments such as arid areas.

Source: www.ifoam.org

GMO & BIOTECH

Genetically modified rice may soon be part of a Chinese meal. China has worked on research of transgenic rice and is strongly considering its commercialization. Studies of the safety of the technology have been completed. Discussions about whether to open it up to the market are now in the final stages. The Center for Chinese Agricultural Policy notes that GM rice could lead to an 80% cut in pesticide use and that yields could increase by around 6%. For these reasons GM rice is likely to be welcomed by farmers.

Source: Crop Biotech Update

OTHER NEWS

The first results from the FLABEL project are now available. FLABEL (**Food Labelling to Advance Better Education for Life**) is a project funded by the EU Commission. Its objective is to understand how nutrition information on food labels affects dietary choices and consumer habits. Following 6 months of research in 28 countries (27 EU Members States & Turkey), more than 37,000 products have been audited to determine the penetration of nutrition labelling in Europe today. The number of products with nutrition information on pack, the main types of systems used in each country, the prevalence of nutrition and health claim usage, and the prevalence of nutrition information on products that are attractive to children, were assessed in 5 product categories (sweet biscuits, breakfast cereals, ready meals, carbonated soft drinks and yoghurts). Nutrition information was found on a large majority of products audited and its presence seems higher than reported previously.

Source: www.flabel.org

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LAWS, STANDARDS & AGREEMENTS

DG Environment of the EU Commission has recently launched an evaluation of the EU legislative framework in the field of cultivation of GMOs under Directive 2001/18/EC and Regulation (EC) N° 1829/2003, and marketing of uses other than cultivation under Directive 2001/18/EC. The aim of this technical evaluation is to assess the extent to which the implementation of the legislative framework on the cultivation and marketing of GMOs has achieved the objective of protecting human and animal health, the environment and consumers' interest, while at the same time ensuring the functioning of the internal market. The evaluation will be completed by the beginning of 2010.

Source: http://gmregister.ghkint.com

SCIENCE & RESEARCH

A recent Cornell University study reports that the gene that gives rice its highly valued fragrance stems from an ancestor of **basmati rice** and dispels other long-held assumptions about the origins of basmati: this kind of rice, long assumed to be an *Indica* variety, **is actually more closely related genetically to *Japonica* rice**. Basmati, which is endemic to northern India, Pakistan and Iran, has been falsely assumed to be in the *Indica* group due to its characteristic long, thin grains and because it is grown in India, where *Indica* varieties are widespread. Through genetic analysis of the gene *BADH2*, the researchers determined that the major fragrance allele originated in a *Japonica*-ancestor of basmati rice and was later transferred to *Indica* varieties, including Thai jasmine rice. India has both *Indica* and *Japonica* rice and Basmati is genetically more closely related to sushi rice from Japan than to many of the long grained *Indica* rices grown elsewhere in India. It is intriguing to think about what these relationships tell us about human migration and cultural exchange. Moreover, the findings have important implications for claims of ownership of rice varieties and traits. Thai scientists recently patented the use of a genetic engineering strategy to knock out the *BADH2* gene while claiming the fragrance trait was part of their national heritage through Thai jasmine rice. They would like to use this approach to impart this characteristic fragrance on other crops like wheat and maize.

Source: www.news.cornell.edu/stories/Sept09/RiceFragrance.html

The eating and cooking qualities of rice are important rice-grain characteristics of interest to breeders. They are determined by three characteristics specifying the **physical and chemical properties of the starch in the endosperm**: apparent amylose content, gel consistency and gelatinization temperature. One hundred and ninety-two accessions of *Oryza*, mostly from Thailand, were assayed by researchers from Kasetsart University, Thailand. Alleles were identified at seven starch-synthesis gene loci and the nucleotide sequences were submitted to GenBank (the collection of all publicly available DNA sequences). The *Oryza* accessions from Thailand displayed a high nucleotide diversity in starch synthesis genes compared with previous estimates of *Oryza* species based on estimates of multiple loci.

Source: Crop Biotech Update

EVENTS & MEETINGS

2009 EFFoST Conference, **New Challenges in Food Preservation: Processing - Safety – Sustainability**, 11-13 November 2009, Budapest, Hungary. The conference is organized by the European Federation of Food Science & Technology (EFFoST), a non-profit association that federates food science and technology organisations in Europe.

Source: www.effostconference.com