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Rice Food Safety & Other Facts

Newsletter
Nr. 46
December
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FOOD SAFETY

Rapid Alert System Notifications for Food

date	notification type	notified by	subject
27/10/2015	border rejection	ITALY	unauthorised genetically modified (CRYI) rice stick from China
28/10/2015	information for attention	SWITZERLAND	migration of benzophenone (1.6 mg/kg - ppm) from cardboard box containing rice noodles from Sri Lanka
14/12/2015	border rejection	ITALY	aflatoxins (B1 = 27.3 µg/kg - ppb) in white rice flour from Sri Lanka

Source: [//ec.europa.eu/food/food/rapidalert/rasff_portal_database_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/food/food/rapidalert/rasff_portal_database_en.htm)

GMO & BIOTECH

EASAC - the European Academies' Science Advisory Council - is formed by the national science academies of the EU Member States to enable them to collaborate with each other in providing independent science advice to European policy-makers. EASAC has recently released a statement where it is stressed the critical importance of **supporting innovation in plant breeding** to contribute to EU objectives in agriculture and food and nutrition security. EASAC recommends that current legislative uncertainties are resolved: EU regulators should confirm that the products of new breeding techniques, when they do not contain foreign DNA, do not fall within the scope of GMO legislation. The aim in the EU should be to regulate the specific agricultural trait and/or product, not the technology. At the same time, there is also continuing need for wide-ranging engagement on critical issues and this should include re-examination of the appropriate use of the precautionary principle.

Source: www.easac.eu

ORGANIC FOOD, PDO, PGI

- The Italian Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry announced that an institutional campaign recently started to raise knowledge and support the **consumption of PDO and PGI**. The initiative, which involves the large-scale retail outlets, is part of the actions that the Ministry has been taking to promote the high quality Italian products, that were already stars at Expo Milano 2015. The information campaign aims to strengthen the segment of products with geographical indications both in the domestic and foreign market. Abroad a lot of work has been done in the past two years on three crucial fronts as diplomatic relations, promotion of products and fight against false Made in Italy food.

Source: www.politicheagricole.it

- Organized by the European Parliament, on 18th November in Brussels a meeting took place of experts and members of the Committee for Scientific and Technological Options Assessment (STOA) to discuss the **nutritional benefits of organic food**. It was stressed that organic farming should receive more attention in the public debate since it is an investment for the public health. The experts agreed that consumers of organic food are generally healthier but lack the evidence to determine that organic crops have a more significant nutritional value than traditional ones. It was also stressed that the consumption of organic products has a positive impact on health: the people who buy them on average consume more fruits, vegetables, whole grains or dried fruit than consumers of non-organic food.

Source: www.sinab.it



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- The Paris agreement reached on 12th December 2015 establishes a worldwide commitment to limiting global temperature increase well below 2°C and the pursuit of efforts to keep it under 1.5°C. The agreement is unique insofar as it unites 195 countries in defining a common long-term vision on how to deal with climate change. However, it falls short of delivering on concrete commitments. It is clear that without a contribution from agriculture, the 1.5°C goal cannot be achieved: agriculture has to transition from a climate change aggravator to a climate change solution.

Alone this year, the use of chemical fertilizers in growing food will generate more Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions than the total GHG emissions from all of the cars and trucks driven in the US, and, destroy soils and ecosystems in the process. Farmers must be empowered to grow food for themselves and the increasing global population without exacerbating climate change and endangering the resilience of their farms. According to IFOAM (International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements) policy-makers will have to facilitate the adoption of agricultural practices such as organic farming that both reduce emissions and capture carbon in soils.

Source: www.ifoam.org

SCIENCE & RESEARCH

Chemical triggers that make plants defend themselves against insects could replace pesticides, causing less damage to the environment. New research from Zhejiang University in China identifies five chemicals that trigger rice plants to fend off a common pest – the white-backed planthopper, *Sogatella furcifera*. Pesticides are used around the world to control insects that destroy crops, but often they kill indiscriminately also the natural enemies of pests. What's more, in some areas some pests are resistant to pesticides. Because of the problems of using pesticides, it's vital to find new solutions to help protect rice plants from infestation. Plants have natural self-defense mechanisms that kick in when they are infested with pests like the planthopper. This defense mechanism can be switched on using chemicals that do not harm the environment and are not toxic to the insects or their natural enemies. For the first time the researchers determined to what extent different **chemicals switched on the plants' defense mechanism** and demonstrated that some phenoxyalkanoic acid derivatives have the potential to become plant protection agents against a pest and could be used in insect pest management. The next step for the research will be to explore how effective the chemicals are at boosting the plants' defenses and controlling planthoppers in the field.

Source: *Crop Biotech Update*

LAWS, STANDARDS & AGREEMENTS

The Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development of the European Parliament forward a resolution to the Council and the Commission on **technological solutions to sustainable agriculture in the EU**. According to the motion the EU and the Member States, academia and industry including breeders, the agro-chemicals sector, farmers and food manufactures, must all work together to improve the translation of research into practice, from lab to farm to fork. This will allow Europe to unlock a new phase in agricultural innovation. For this purpose it is essential that emerging technologies are not stifled by unnecessary and burdensome regulation before they have a chance to deliver benefits. The Commission should improve its regulatory framework in line with the principles of Better Regulation to ensure timely, efficient and effective decision-making procedures and should use its new Scientific Advice Mechanism (SAM) to design a regulatory framework which places greater emphasis on risk-based and scientific evidence when determining the balance between benefits and risks in the adoption of new technologies, products and practices.

Source: www.europarl.europa.eu/news