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Rice Food Safety & other Facts

Newsletter Nr. 6

15th Dec 2008

FOOD SAFETY

- Rapid Alert System

Following official control on the market on Dec 5th a notification was sent on by Italy concerning unauthorised use of colour E 102 - tartrazine and of colour E 110 - Sunset Yellow FCF in frozen balls of rice with meat cheese and ham from Italy

Source: RASFF weekly Overview nr. 49

ORGANIC FOOD

Alce Nero is the first Italian brand which has obtained **organic certification** in China for its products, including rice. Alce Nero has started ten years ago to export foodstuffs to Japan and it has set up the joint venture Alce Nero Asia to support trading towards Far Eastern markets.

Source: www.risoitaliano.org

GMO & BIOTECH

- The Italian Ministry of Agriculture has recently licensed the guidelines for implementing **GM crops field trials**. The guidelines list the varieties which are allowed to be grown, the safety rules to be adopted to avoid cross pollination and the crop rotation scheme for the fields sown with GM plants. So far field trials with GM crops were forbidden in Italy.

Source: *Il Sole 24 Ore*.

- **Is China ready for GM rice?** In an effort to avoid a food crisis as the population grows, China is putting its weight behind genetically modified strains of the country's staple food crop. However the consequences would be unthinkable if large-scale cultivation of GM rice were not properly regulated, according to Xue Dayuan, chief scientist on biodiversity at the Nanjing Institute of Environmental Sciences. Proper regulation of GM crops is crucial for delaying the emergence of resistant pests. Many crops, such as cotton and rice, are grown as a monoculture in China, which would select pests that are resistant to the toxins. The scale of the effect that commercial GM rice could have on China and the rest of the world argues for caution.

Source: *Nature* 455, 850-852 (2008).

SCIENCE & RESEARCH

Arcadia Biosciences, Inc., an agricultural technology company focused on developing technologies and products that benefit the environment and human health, announced that it received a grant from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) for the development of **Nitrogen Use Efficient (NUE), Salt-Tolerant and Water Use Efficient (WUE) rice** and wheat in India. Between rapid population growth and challenging climatic conditions, Indian farmers are in a constant struggle to feed the country's people. New agricultural technologies like those outlined in the USAID grant can provide a significant boost to agricultural productivity without the need for additional equipment or major changes in farming practice.

Source: www.merid.org/fs-agbiotech/index.php



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LAWS, STANDARDS & AGREEMENTS

The **Commission Reg. (EC) No 1213/2008** has recently been published in the OJ L328, concerning a coordinated multiannual Community control programme for 2009, 2010 and 2011 to ensure compliance with maximum levels of and to assess the consumer exposure to pesticide residues in and on food of plant and animal origin. Pesticides should be monitored in thirty foodstuffs (including rice) that constitute the major components of the diet in the Community. At least 65 samples of rice have to be taken and analysed by Italy in 2011.

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

OTHER NEWS

- Another 40 million people have been pushed into hunger this year primarily due to higher food prices, according to preliminary estimates published by FAO in the 2008 issue of the "**State of food insecurity in the world**". The effects of rising food prices vary substantially among countries that have similar dietary patterns but differ in terms of land distribution and productivity levels. In Bangladesh and Viet Nam, rice is the major food staple and also the main food crop grown by small farmers. Viet Nam has a fairly egalitarian distribution of land, with most farmers participating in the production and sale of rice. In contrast, most farmers in Bangladesh have limited access to land. Given the different land tenure arrangements and the importance of agriculture in household income, high rice prices have a substantially different impact on rural welfare in the two countries. In Viet Nam, even the poorer rural households gain from rising prices. In Bangladesh, the impact is largely negative for the poorest and landless households.

Source: www.fao.org/SOF

- Fifteen U.S. rice mills (which represent nearly 70 percent of total domestic rice shipments) have signed licensing agreements for the "**Grown in the USA**" logo. The logo, developed by the USA Rice Federation for use on packaging containing rice grown and packaged in the U.S. for domestic and worldwide markets, will help consumers and foodservice professionals identify and choose U.S.-grown rice.

Source: beta.irri.org/news

EVENTS & MEETINGS

Joint FAO/WHO Expert Meeting on the **Application of Nanotechnologies in the Food and Agriculture Sectors: Potential Food Safety Implications** (To be held on 1-5 June 2009, at FAO Headquarters, Rome, Italy). Call for information, **deadline 9 January 2009**. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the World Health Organization (WHO) have recognized a need for scientific advice on any food safety implications that may arise from the use of nanotechnologies in the food and agriculture sectors. FAO/WHO is seeking submissions of published and unpublished technical information to ensure that all relevant information on the use of nanotechnologies in food and agriculture and the potential risks will be considered. The information will form part of the database that will be examined to assure a comprehensive understanding of the technologies, their applications and the potential risks in order to facilitate the development of appropriate and effective recommendations.

Source: www.fao.org/ag/agn/agns/meetings_consultations_en.asp