



www.enterisi.it
e-mail: info@enterisi.it
tel. +39.02.8855111
fax +39.02.30131084
P. IVA 03036460156

Rice Food Safety & other Facts

Newsletter Nr. 9

16th Feb 2009

FOOD SAFETY

- Rapid Alert System

No notification concerning rice in the last two weeks.

Source: www.efsa.europa.eu

- According to **Regulation (EC) No 1924/2006 on nutrition and health claims made on foods**, any claim made on a food label in the EU has to be clear and substantiated by scientific evidence. EFSA is responsible for verifying the scientific substantiation of the submitted claims, some of which are currently in use, some of which are proposed by applicants. In January 2009 EFSA published the list of health claims received from the European Commission for assessment. In total EFSA has received 4,185 main health claim entries, taking into account the conditions of use and references available for around 10,000 similar health claims. By January 2010 the European Commission is required to draw up a "positive list" of permitted 'function' health claims in the EU (such as "calcium is good for your bones"). EFSA will provide scientific advice to support the European Commission and Member States in this process.

Source: www.efsa.europa.eu

GMO & BIOTECH

The cultivation of genetically modified plants continues to increase worldwide: in 2008, GM crops rose by 9.4 per cent to occupy 125 million hectares. GM plants are employed in 25 countries, of which Bolivia, Burkina Faso and Egypt are the newest. In all countries with large-scale cultivation, more GM plants were sown in 2008 than in the previous year. One half of the global area under cultivation may be found in the USA, which is followed by Argentina, Brazil and India. Biotech soybean continued to be the principal biotech crop in 2008, occupying 65.8 million hectares or 53% of global biotech area, followed by biotech maize, cotton and canola. GM varieties represent 72 per cent of the global production of soybean and 47 per cent of cotton. In Europe, the commercial application of GM plants is comparatively insignificant: in seven EU countries, the crop area of Bt maize totals to slightly more than 100,000 hectares, approximately 80% of which are in Spain. The most important of the new biotech crops that are now ready for adoption is biotech rice: principally the pest/disease resistant biotech rice extensively field tested in China and awaiting approval by the Chinese regulatory authorities; and Golden Rice expected to be available in 2012.

Source: ISAAA Brief 39-2008

SCIENCE & RESEARCH

By comparing the sequences of a **single gene in 14 rice species**, an international team of researchers has successfully traced **the evolutionary history** of the world's most important crop. Scientists from the University of Arizona and the Chinese Academy of Sciences focused their attention on *moc1*, a gene that decides how many shoots will form on a rice plant. Understanding the variations of *moc1* could lead to the development of domesticated rice varieties with more branching, increased plant size or other favorable characteristics. The comparison revealed how rice has changed from as far back as 14 million years ago. As rice adapted to climate changes and other natural circumstances, its genetic structure changed, keeping some genes and losing others.

Source: *Crop Biotech Update*



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LAWS, STANDARDS & AGREEMENTS

In the framework of the Communication on simplification and better regulation of the CAP, the Commission recently adopted a Communication **removing 240 obsolete agricultural legislative acts** from the legislation in force. These 240 pieces of legislation relate mostly to temporary measures, exceptional market support measures, granting of financial contributions and transitional measures linked to the accession of new Member States. The acts relate to various sectors of the CAP, including **rice**. The Commission will continue this exercise of cleaning up EU legislation.

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

OTHER NEWS

Shivaji Pandey, director of the FAO Plant Production and Protection Division endorsed "conservation agriculture" this month during a keynote speech at the IV World Congress on Conservation Agriculture in New Delhi, India. Conservation Agriculture is a farming system that does away with regular plowing and tillage and promotes permanent soil cover and diversified crop rotation to ensure optimal soil health and productivity. Conventional intensive farming methods had often contributed to environmental damage, resulting in declining rates of agricultural productivity. Conservation agriculture could not only help bring yields back up but also deliver several important environmental benefits. In addition to restoring "soil health," conservation agriculture also saves on energy use in agriculture, reducing greenhouse emissions, and could further mitigate climate change by helping to sequester more carbon in the soil.

Source: FAO Newsroom

EVENTS & MEETINGS

BioFach 2009 – Nuremberg, 19/22 February. The most important fair of the organic world celebrates its 20th anniversary. It brings together approximately 2,900 exhibitors and 46,000 trade visitors from 124 countries of the world to Nuremberg every year in February. BioFach is present on four continents with its own events in Japan, the United States, South Africa and China.

Source: www.biofach.de

Salon International de l'Agriculture (SIA) – Paris, 21/02-01/03/2009. The International Agricultural Show allows visitors to explore all of agriculture's richness and diversity in France and the rest of the world. Representatives from throughout the agricultural sector will attend this event: over 1,000 exhibitors, representative of 17 countries and 22 French regions, 700 producers from France and the rest of the world.

Source: www.salon-agriculture.com