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Rice Food

Safety & other Facts

Newsletter Nr. 12

10th April 2009

FOOD SAFETY

Rapid Alert System

- On 27th March a notification was sent by the Commission service concerning unauthorised genetically modified (Bt 63 rice) rice noodles from Thailand, via the United Kingdom.

Source: www.efsa.europa.eu

GMO & BIOTECH

A research group at the Kansas State University had embarked into discovering the genetic key into the resistance of rice against an important rice disease, **bacterial blight**. Two pathovars of the pathogen are being studied: *oryzicola* and *oryzae*. Rice varieties are being exposed to the two pathogens and genes that are triggered are consequently identified. Wild relatives or rice variants of these genes that are immune to manipulation by the pathogens could be introduced to other rice varieties

Source: Crop Biotech Update.

Chinese scientists say they have identified the mutant gene that has played a key role in the development of **higher yielding rice varieties in China in recent years**. The "dep1" gene, which is the mutant of the "DEP1" gene, can accelerate the division of rice cells and produce more grains per panicle. The dep1 gene will become an important tool in rice breeding, according to Fu Xiangdong of the Chinese Academy of Sciences' Institute of Genetics and Developmental Biolog. This gene should be able to serve a similar function in crops like wheat and barley as it does in rice, thus raising hopes for the development.

Source: www.merid.org/fs-agbiotech

SCIENCE & RESEARCH

The German Federal Ministry of Education and Research has awarded Freie Universität Berlin and China Agricultural University a € 1.35 million (US\$ 1.74 million) grant for a project that could speed up the development of **nitrogen use efficient rice varieties**. The scientists working on the project will focus on deciphering the molecular structures responsible for urea's absorption and metabolism in the crop. Urea is the nitrogenous fertilizer most commonly used in agriculture around the world, particularly in Asia where it accounts for more than half of the fertilizers used. Availability of nitrogen use efficient rice varieties can significantly reduce the amount of fertilizers farmers apply to fields. This can increase farm productivity and reduce the ecological impacts associated with nitrogen fertilizers.

Source: Crop Biotech Update



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LAWS, STANDARDS & AGREEMENTS

The European Commission has launched a call for tender for a project "**Inventory of certification schemes for agricultural products and foodstuffs marketed in the EU Member States**". The aim of this project is to put in place an inventory of certification schemes for agricultural products and foodstuffs which are marketed in the EU, to describe the main parameters of these schemes and classify them according to a number of criteria. This inventory will be used in the further development of agricultural product quality policy of the European Commission.

Source: <http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/newsroom/en/330.htm>

OTHER NEWS

- In the framework of the 5th edition of the awareness campaign on the importance of a healthy and correct diet called "**FOOD 4U**" which is promoted by the Italian Ministry of Agriculture, and addressed to students and teachers of secondary schools from 16 European Countries, a competition has been announced for the school year 2008 - 2009 for making a video spot. The purpose of the spot is to draw the attention of young people to the importance of being aware of food choice and diet. Deadline date of the competition: May 29th 2009.

Source: www.food-4u.it

- World rice demand is expected to rise over the next 15-20 years, with hybrid grains anticipated to play a vital role in accommodating the world's possible food crisis in the future. So Germany-based Bayer Group plans to invest approximately US\$2.8M between 2008 and 2012 on **hybrid rice development in Thailand**. It expects to commercialize hybrid rice seed under the Arize brand in 2011. Currently, Charoen Pokphand Group, the country's largest agriculture company, is one of a handful of active players in hybrid rice technology. Thailand is the world's sixth-largest rice producer but the biggest exporter, shipping 60 percent of output abroad.

Source: Crop Biotech Update

At the end of March Members of the Parliament of the European Union renewed their commitment to the **Millennium Development Goals**, which aim to halve extreme poverty by 2015. Deliberations made by the European Parliament resulted in a resolution to increase and standardize their financial contributions. With the estimated 1.4 billion living in poverty, there is significant lack of access to basic health care and primary education that results to death and perpetuation of the poverty cycle. Member countries were then urged to improve the quantity and quality of aid for the poor countries.

Source: www.europarl.europa.eu/news

EVENTS & MEETINGS

Some of the world's leading scientists involved in the research of genetically modified organisms will gather together for a **five-day conference in the Vatican on May 15-19, 2009**. Ingo Potrykus, chairman of the Golden Rice Humanitarian Board, has organized the meeting on behalf of the Pontifical Academy of Sciences. The program is divided in eight sections, which will highlight topics such as contributions from transgenic plants, state of application of the technology, putative risk and risk management, potential impact on development, hurdles against effective use for the poor, etc.

Source: Crop Biotech Update