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Rice Food Safety & Other Facts



Newsletter
Nr. 17

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FOOD SAFETY

Rapid Alert System

Three informations concerning rice:

- sent by Romania concerning long grain rice from Bulgaria infested with insects (*Sitophilus oryzae*);
- sent by Sweden concerning unauthorised genetically modified (Bt 63: 0.002 %) rice vermicelli from China.
- sent by Finland concerning unauthorised genetically modified (Bt 63) rice vermicelli from China, dispatched from the Netherlands.

Source: www.efsa.europa.eu

Following a request from the European Commission, the Panel on GMO of EFSA was asked to review the published scientific paper of Lu & Yang (2009) and to indicate whether this paper contains new information that would alter the previous EFSA GMO Panel environmental safety conclusions on the **GM rice event LLRice62**. This scientific paper reviews vertical gene flow between cultivated GM rice and cross-compatible wild/weedy rice relatives and the potential ecological consequences thereof. In 2007, the EFSA GMO Panel issued a scientific opinion on the risk assessment evaluation of the market authorisation of LLRice62 for food/feed uses, import and processing in the EU. In light of the new scientific paper and having considered relevant scientific publications on vertical gene flow in rice, the EFSA GMO Panel concludes that, in terms of risk to the environment, no new scientific evidence has been provided that invalidates the previous environmental risk assessment evaluation of LLRice62 for its intended uses, which exclude cultivation.

Source: www.efsa.europa.eu

ORGANIC FOOD

The JRC (Joint Research Centre of EU Commission) is organising an International Workshop on **Organic food authentication: challenge or utopia** (Nov 30 - Dec 1, 2009 - Geel, Belgium). The rapid development of the organic sector and the ever-increasing demand for organic products brings new challenges for the international organic food certification and guarantee systems. Organic produce remains amongst the most difficult to monitor and control. Indeed, currently all scientists can do is test for what should not be there (e.g. chemical pesticide residues). In this context, the development of a strategy to authenticate organic food products is highly desirable in support to the certification and inspection systems. By bringing together the main groups working in the field, this workshop will present a balanced overview of the state-of-the-art research in this topic. Themes of the workshop are: regulations and certification systems, fraud cases, potential "markers", potential analytical tools, challenges & research needs.

Source: <http://irmm.jrc.ec.europa.eu/html/events/events/organic.htm>

GMO & BIOTECH

Using transgenic methods, scientists from ETH Zurich, Switzerland have succeeded in increasing the **iron content in milled rice** more than six-fold by transferring two plant genes into an existing rice variety. Milled rice does not have enough iron to satisfy the daily requirement, even if consumed in large quantities. The research team discovered that rice plants express the two transferred genes to produce an enzyme which mobilizes iron, and the protein ferritin, which stores iron. Their synergistic action allows the rice plant to absorb more iron from the soil and store it in the rice kernel.

Source: *Crop Biotech Update*



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LAWS, STANDARDS & AGREEMENTS

The **Commission Reg. (EC) No 901/2009** has recently been published in the OJ L256, 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. The samples taken and analysed shall include at least 10 samples of baby food and one sample, where available, from products originating from organic farming that reflects the market share of organic products in each Member State.

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

SCIENCE & RESEARCH

Rice research gets a leg up on understanding plant reactions to environment. Since plants are rooted in the ground, they can't move away when it gets too hot, too dry or too wet. Understanding how plants respond to the environment would give breeders some clues on how to breed plants more capable of adapting to extremes. Applying a technique called **metabolite screening**, researchers at Texas AgriLife Research identified **17 biomarkers in rice** that can allow to follow changes in metabolism rapidly across a large number of plant samples and help diagnose the plant's needs and finally understand how to help a plant yield more rice. This study in rice is new because in the past scientists have only considered a few aspects of rice metabolism. So while one aspect might be understood, its interactions with other aspects were not included in breeding decisions.

Source: <http://agnews.tamu.edu/showstory.php?id=1502>

Rice that doesn't have to be cooked: a new strain of rice offers hope for malnourished children in India. If Indian scientists are correct, hundreds of millions of people across the subcontinent could benefit from a specially-developed strain of rice that "cooks" simply by being soaked in water. Experts at the Central Rice Research Institute (CRRRI) in Orissa who have developed the grain were inspired by so-called soft rice, that grows in the north-east Indian state of Assam. Traditional recipes call for such rice to be soaked overnight in water, then eaten with mustard oil and onions. Until now, these low-yielding grains have not grown outside the north-east, but the scientists at CRRRI have managed to develop a hybrid of a traditional soft rice with a high-yielding variety of regular rice. The result has been called Aghunibora. The aim was to produce a grain that would allow people across the country to prepare the rice simply by putting it in water. In a country where malnutrition remains rampant, the grains could prove a crucial weapon against hunger.

Source: www.southasiamail.com/news.php?id=44350

EVENTS & MEETINGS

Organic Food and Farming in times of Climate Change, Biodiversity loss and Global Food Crisis - 2nd European Organic Congress - 1 Dec 2009, Brussels. The 2nd European Organic congress will offer space to discuss the contribution of organic food systems to face the challenges of food production in the 21 century - from climate change to loss of biodiversity - and will lead to conclusions on how the Common agricultural Policy as well as other European policies have to be changed in order to make European farming fit for facing the future challenges.

Source: www.organic-congress-ifoameu.org