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Rice Food Safety & Other Facts



Newsletter
Nr. 20

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FOOD SAFETY

Rapid Alert System

- Five notifications sent by:
 - ✓ Germany concerning unauthorised genetically modified (BT 63) rice noodles from China, via the Netherlands;
 - ✓ Czech Republic concerning undeclared gluten (58.6; 6.7 mg/kg - ppm) in rice flour from the Czech Republic, with raw material from Italy, via the Slovak Republic;
 - ✓ Germany concerning unauthorised genetically modified (Bt - presumably KeFeng6) rice vermicelli from China, via the Netherlands;
 - ✓ Finland concerning aluminium (71 mg/kg - ppm) in vermicelli rice from China;
 - ✓ Greece concerning aflatoxins (B1 = 3.5; Tot. = 3.5 µg/kg - ppb) in rice from Pakistan.

Source: http://ec.europa.eu/food/food/rapidalert/rasff_portal_database_en.htm

- After two years of research and consultation, EFSA has revised and updated the **guidance for assessing the impact of GM plants on the environment**. The revision of the guideline is a response to a request from the EU Commission and demonstrates EFSA's commitment to staying at the forefront of recent developments in the field of GM plant environmental risk assessment. The guideline updated the specific areas covering the persistence and invasiveness of the GM plant, taking into account plant-to-plant gene transfer; the likelihood and consequences of gene transfer from the plant to micro-organisms; the potential evolution of resistance in target pests; the impact of the GM plant on non-target organisms; and the impact that the cultivation, management and harvesting techniques associated with the GM plant may have. In addition, EFSA also updated the detailed requirements for the choice of appropriate non-GM comparators (which are the non-GM plants with which the GM plant is compared during the safety evaluation) and types of receiving environments to be considered; the experimental design of laboratory and field studies, and their statistical analysis; and the consideration of possible long-term effects. A public consultation on this revised guideline was recently announced which will last until the end of April, 2010.

- EFSA has published a second series of opinions on a **list of 'general function' health claims** compiled by Member States and the EU Commission. Scientific experts on EFSA's Panel on Dietetic Products, Nutrition and Allergies assessed all available scientific data submitted to substantiate the 416 health claims. The evaluations of the Panel were positive when there was sufficient scientific evidence available to support the claim, such as those related to vitamins and minerals. Experts issued unfavourable opinions on most of the claims in the second series due to the poor quality of the information provided to EFSA including: lack of information to identify the substance on which the claim is based, e.g. "probiotics"; lack of evidence that the claimed effect is indeed beneficial to the maintenance or improvement of the functions of the body (e.g. food with "antioxidant properties"); lack of human studies with reliable measures of the claimed health benefit.

Source: www.efsa.europa.eu/EFSA

ORGANIC FOOD

The 11th edition of **The World of Organic Agriculture - Statistics and Emerging Trends 2010** is now available. The book documents recent developments in global organic agriculture. It includes contributions from representatives of the organic sector from throughout the world and provides comprehensive organic farming statistics compiled by IFOAM (International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements) that cover surface area under organic management, numbers of farms and specific information about land use in organic systems.

Source: www.ifoam.org



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GMO & BIOTECH

- **GM foods still have a long way to go before they can reach the Chinese market** even though the Chinese Ministry of Agriculture has certificated two varieties of GM rice. GM safety is a hot issue at the National People's Congress (NPC) under way in the capital Beijing. Before reaching store shelves, GM products intended for human consumption need to be certified by government agencies from the health and quality inspection sectors. Any of these agencies might stop GM rice from entering the market. As a country with a huge population to feed, China should maintain its leading role in the research of advanced agricultural technology, but the country needs to be prudent in GM production.

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

- Researchers at the Fuidan University in China and University of Leiden in the Netherlands have developed a model that can effectively predict **pollen-mediated gene flow (PMGF) in rice**. Such model can play an essential role for assessing and managing risks from transgene escape. The construction of the model was based on the pollen dispersal pattern in rice, taking outcrossing rates of recipients and cross-compatibility between rice and its wild relatives into consideration. The researchers used published rice gene flow data to evaluate their model. Model simulation showed that: pollen density decreased in a simple exponential pattern with distances to the rice field; high relative humidity reduced pollen dispersal distances; PMGF frequency increases with the increase of pollen source size (the area of a rice field), but this effect levelled off with a large pollen-source size. The researchers said that the model can predict PMGF in rice, as well as other wind-pollinated plant species like barley and wheat, under diverse conditions therefore facilitating the determination of isolation distances to minimize transgene escape.

Source: *Crop Biotech Update*

OTHER NEWS

The final report of the EuropaBio workshop on the "**Environmental risk assessment for the cultivation of genetically modified crops**" held in Brussels, Belgium in October 2009 is now available online. It discusses, among others, the conduct of environmental risk assessment, tiered framework for testing applications and studies, and challenges in performing field trials.

Source: www.europabio.org

LAWS, STANDARDS & AGREEMENTS

In the OJ L37/2010 the **Commission Regulation (EU) No 116/2010** was published amending Regulation (EC) No 1924/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council with regard to the list of nutrition claims. (see also the section "Food safety" of this newsletter)

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

EVENTS & MEETINGS

Some 1,000 World Food Prize Laureates, ministers, farmers, community development organizations, leading scientists, and innovators will gather in **Montpellier, France from 28-31 March 2010** for the first **Global Conference on Agricultural Research for Development** (GCARD). The G8 called for this meeting to identify required actions to improve agriculture and outline research priorities. GCARD will seek to strengthen and harness the use of agricultural research to meet the global food requirements for a growing population in an environmentally sustainable process.

Source: *Crop Biotech Update*