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Rice Food Safety & Other Facts



Newsletter
Nr. 18

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FOOD SAFETY

Rapid Alert System

Five notifications concerning rice (December and January):

- sent by Czech Republic concerning aluminium (31.5 mg/kg - ppm) in instant rice noodles from Vietnam;
- sent by United Kingdom concerning aflatoxins (B1 = 12; Tot. = 14 µg/kg - ppb) in basmati rice from Pakistan;
- sent by Austria concerning unauthorised genetically modified (Bt 63 rice) rice noodles from China, dispatched from Taiwan;
- sent by Italy concerning cadmium (0.625 mg/kg - ppm) in rice from Italy (company's own check);
- sent by Germany concerning unauthorised genetically modified (Bt 63 rice) rice vermicelli from China.

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

GMO & BIOTECH

China's Ministry of Agriculture recently released a list of GM crop varieties that obtained a biosafety certificate from the GM biosafety administration office in 2009. In the list GM rice was included, developed by Huazhong Agricultural University. The approved GM rice varieties are "Huahui No. 1" and hybrids "Bt Shanyou 63" with Bt *cry1A* gene showing high resistance to rice lepidopteran pests. It is noteworthy that China has now completed approval of a troika of the key biotech crops in a logical chronology – first was FIBER (cotton), second was FEED (maize) and third was FOOD (rice), all developed by Chinese public sector institutions. **Bt rice** offers the potential to generate benefits of US\$4 billion annually from an average yield increase of 8%, and an 80% decrease in insecticides, equivalent to 17 kg per hectare. It is estimated that 75% of all rice in China is infested with the rice-borer pest, which Bt rice controls.

Source: *Crop Biotech Update*

The Dutch Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality has released the **Proceedings of the International Conference on GMOs in European Agriculture and Food Production** held in The Hague on November 25-26, 2009. The Chair's Report outlines that there are large differences between Member States vis-à-vis the cultivation of GMO crops. A system that makes a clear distinction between imports and cultivation of GMOs, leaving decisions on the latter to the Member States, might do justice to that diversity. Moreover the need to address socio-economic aspects is evident, even if it is less clear how to tackle the subject. Involving socio-economic aspects in the authorization process drew both support and reluctance. The EU must comply with international agreements such as the WTO; and the criteria must be objective and science-based to avoid arbitrary decision making. Europe should be very specific about its intentions regarding GMO and about the way it is going to implement them. Further elaboration and implementation would thus require flexibility, time, and learning-by-doing. Although a careful debate on the issue is necessary, speed is essential, given the urgency of the challenges agriculture is facing.

Source: *Crop Biotech Update*



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ORGANIC FOOD

The European Commission's Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development invites all Europeans to cast their vote in the final stage of the **EU organic logo** competition. The Organic Farming website will host the online vote where the three final logos will be displayed until 31 January. The new logo aims to enhance consumer protection and promote organic farming. Unlike the current logo, the winning entry will be obligatory for all pre-packaged organic products that derive from the 27 Member States and meet the labelling standards.

Source: *European Commission- Agriculture News Digest*

LAWS, STANDARDS & AGREEMENTS

On 11 December 2009, the **European Union and Switzerland concluded negotiations on a bilateral agreement for the protection of their respective Geographical Indications for agricultural products and foodstuffs**. After finalisation of the preliminary procedures, the draft agreement will protect the Geographical Indications of each of the two parties on the territory of the other.

Source: *European Commission - Agriculture News Digest*

In OJ L269/2009 **Commission Regulation (EC) No 953/2009** was published **concerning substances that may be added for specific nutritional purposes in foods for particular nutritional uses**. A number of nutritional substances such as vitamins, minerals, amino acids and others may be added to foods for particular nutritional uses in order to ensure that the particular nutritional requirements of the persons for whom those foods are intended are fulfilled, as established by generally accepted scientific data. The manufacturer or, where appropriate, the importer has to produce the scientific work and the data establishing that the use of the substances complies with rules listed in the regulation.

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

SCIENCE & RESEARCH

Genes regulating networks that determine rice eating and cooking quality have been pinpointed by a research team from the Chinese Academy of Sciences. The results of this study will help to develop rice varieties with better taste. Rice eating and cooking quality are determined by three properties: amylose content, gel consistency and gelatinization temperature as well as the interaction among them, of which the underlying mechanism remains unclear. The research team found interaction among 18 genes related to starch synthesis cooperating with each other through an association analysis approach. The major and minor starch synthesis-related genes determining these three properties were defined as well as the correlation among them, which revealed a fine regulating network that controls the eating and cooking quality. Studies have shown that the three properties of rice can be changed simultaneously to achieve high-quality in high-yield rice varieties.

Source: *Crop Biotech Update*

EVENTS & MEETINGS

The **2010 International Conference on Biotechnology and Food Science (ICBFS 2010)** will be held in Bangalore, India on February 9-10, 2010. The conference aims to provide a platform for researchers, academicians as well as industrial professionals from all over the world to present their research results and development activities in biotechnology and food science.

Source: <http://www.iacsit.org/icbfs>