

Greenpeace, Chinese official claim GM soybeans cause infertility, warn against US grain imports

Commentators on China's popular Weibo microblog unleashed a fusillade of complaints after the non-profit Greenpeace said that illegal GMO rice seeds were being sold at local markets in the eastern city of Wuhan. The incident came shortly after a high-ranking retired military official – not the first in China – penned a scathing critique of GMO soybean imports, blaming them for a wide range of illnesses and calling the country's reliance on such food “a shocking situation.”

Beijing has an uneasy relationship with GMOs. The size of the country's population and the strain on its food resources suggest GMO crops – which boost yields because they are biologically tweaked to be pest- and drought-resistant – would look ever more attractive to policy makers.

However, because of public concern over health risks and high-level discomfort with China becoming overly reliant on GMO strains developed by foreign companies, China has stopped short of allowing commercial distribution of GMO grains. Imports of genetically modified staple foods, such as corn and soybeans, are allowed as animal feed or only if they'll be further processed, which is supposed to degrade the foods' GMO component.

In another report, Lieutenant General Mi Zhenyu, former deputy director of the Chinese Academy of Military Science, wrote last month in the Science and Technology Digest, a fairly obscure government-run weekly, that the GMO residue of soybeans crushed to make soy oil has found its way into Chinese diets, allegedly causing birth defects, depression, infertility and a long list of other afflictions. “The U.S. dumped soybeans on China due to huge subsidies for their soybean farmers, and in a few years destroyed the traditional Chinese soybean industry,” Mr. Mi wrote.

The English translation of Mr. Mi's essay was published over the weekend on by Chen Yiwen, a senior official with the China Association for Disaster Prevention, on Mr. Chen's [blog](#).

Last year, Major General Peng Guangqian, deputy secretary-general of China's National Security Policy Committee, also wrote a [column](#) warning that rising GMO grain imports would expose China to a costly strategic error. Other brass have openly supported Mr. Peng. The military men's positions underscore how closely GMO food is identified as a tool of Western – particularly U.S. – strategic policy, regardless of whether there's enough evidence to support the association.

The broader public sentiment in China, mainly hinged on health factors, also runs against the notion of allowing GMO food for human consumption. That was the theme of the reaction to Greenpeace's claims that seven out of 15 random samples of rice sold in two markets in Wuhan tested positive for GMO strains. The non-profit said it had sent the samples to an independent testing agency.

China's bloggers were quick to believe Greenpeace's claims. "There are also GMOs in Beijing!" one wrote. "I wonder if markets there sell them too? It's so frightening! Municipal governments should clarify this!"

"We don't even know if GMOs are detrimental to health," another said. "All I want now is the right to know."

Read the full, original article: [Claims That U.S. Soybeans Cause Infertility Stoke China's GMO Battle](#)