

Beijing kicks off campaign to improve GMOs image in China

China's government has kicked off a media campaign in support of genetically modified crops, as it battles a wave of negative publicity over a technology it hopes will play a major role in boosting its food security.

The agriculture ministry earlier this week announced it would try to educate the public on GMO via TV, newspapers and the Internet.

It hopes to stifle anti-GMO sentiment that has gathered momentum in the wake of incidents such as reports that genetically-modified rice had been illegally sold at a supermarket in the center of the country.

Beijing has been a long-time proponent of GMOs, which it sees as broadly safe and as potentially key in helping feed the world's largest population.

But critics have alleged the technology could pose health risks, and while China allows imports of some GMO crops it is yet to permit domestic cultivation.

China has imported millions of tonnes of GMO soybeans each year for the past decade to feed the world's largest stock of farmed pigs and to produce around 40 percent of the country's vegetable oil needs. China consumes around a third of the world's soybeans, and snaps up roughly 65 percent of all imports each year.

"(We will create) a social atmosphere which is beneficial for the healthy development of the genetically-modified industry," the agriculture ministry said in a statement.

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