

China extends permits on GM rice and corn research

The government has renewed permits allowing scientists to grow three varieties of genetically modified rice and corn in China, more than three months after they had expired, suggesting the technology has the continued backing of the authorities.

Some scientists had feared that the Ministry of Agriculture may halt research work on the foods.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that some people in China are wary about the safety of GM crops, amid a succession of food safety scandals on the mainland.

GM rice cannot be sold as food in China, with the government saying it has to be sure that new strains are safe, but the country already imports huge amounts of genetically modified soya beans, mainly from the United States.

The permits issued by the Ministry of Agriculture allow two scientific research groups to produce two types of pest-resistant rice and a type of high-yield corn for five years, according to a report by the Communist Party mouthpiece *People's Daily*.

The fresh permits allow the scientists to grow the crops in open fields and gather data about potentially releasing the strains to farmers in the future.

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