

China's GM crop production drops in 2014 amid safety concerns

China's genetically modified (GM) crop planting areas declined in 2014 amid heated discussions over safety concerns, a study revealed on Wednesday.

Chinese farmers grew 3.9 million hectares of GM cotton in 2014, down some 300,000 hectares from the previous year, according to a study done by the International Service for the Acquisition of Agri-biotech Applications (ISAAA).

ISAAA attributed the drop in cotton cultivation mainly to low prices and high stockpile in China.

GM papaya growing areas expanded nearly 50 percent to some 8,500 hectares from a year earlier. Southwest China's Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region joined Guangdong and Hainan provinces to plant the disease-resistant species.

China now approves only the production of GM cotton and papaya and prohibits commercial production of any GM staple foods. But it is major importer of GM farm produce.

China keeps very cautious about large-scale production of GM crops. Most recently, the Ministry of Agriculture (MOA) reiterated its stance on the issue, saying a line must be drawn between research and production.

"We need to be daring on scientific research and innovation, but very prudent on production," said MOA spokesman Bi Meijia.

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