

China increasing support of GMO research, public education

Research and commercialization of genetically modified organisms (GMO) are expected to gain momentum in China after years of GM crop decline amid public safety concerns.

The “No.1 Central Document of 2015”, jointly issued by the Communist Party of China Central Committee and State Council on Sunday, states clearly that more effort will be put into studying GMOs, supervising their safety and educating the public about them.

“We cannot lag behind others in the GMO research”, said Han Jun, deputy head of the central office for agricultural work.

Currently, only GM cotton and papaya are allowed to be grown commercially in China, with GM staple foods prohibited from being grown. But the country is a major importer of GM farm produce, including soybeans, rapeseed, cotton and corn.

China encourages its scientists to grasp the “commanding heights” of GMO technologies, Han said.

Fierce resistance from the public has turned China from one of the world’s biggest investors in this field into one of the most conservative consumers of the technology.

According to a poll by the Public Opinion Research Laboratory of Shanghai Jiao Tong University last year, less than one percent of the 1,050 respondents fully accepted the GM food. About 33 percent of them said they would not accept GM products and 36 percent were concerned about their safety.

Cheng Tongshun, professor from the Zhou Enlai School of Government with Nankai University, called for increasing the public awareness of GM products through dissemination of knowledge and public discussion.

Read full, original article: Tide to turn for China to grow GMO crops