

Philippine's ban on GMO eggplant a defeat for science

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THE DECISION by the Philippines' Supreme Court to uphold the ban on GMO Bt talong (eggplant) field trials is a huge disappointment to the scientific community and others pursuing the dream of sustainable and progressive agriculture in this country.

The Court upheld the Writ of Kalikasan originally demanded by Greenpeace and other anti-GMO groups in 2012 and backed by the Court of Appeals in 2013. It also struck down the Department of Agriculture's Administrative Order No. 8-2002, potentially throwing the Philippines' GMO assessment and approvals system into unnecessary chaos.

The competence of the Court to adjudicate on matters of law is not in question. However, its judgment that the science on the question of Bt talong and GMOs in general is not settled appears highly skewed and very dependent on biased assessments submitted by Greenpeace and other groups with an overt antiscience agenda.

In effect, the Court has decided that Greenpeace and its fellow activists are more competent to pronounce on scientific matters than the Philippines' National Academy of Science and Technology (NAST), the University of the Philippines Los Baños (UPLB) and the Departments of Agriculture and of Environment and Natural Resources. This is highly irregular, to say the least. . .

The Court's decision is disappointing to scientists and antipoverty campaigners because the Philippines has always been a probiotechnology regional leader. . .

Let's hope that the Philippine government and the scientific community can quickly deal with the issues raised by the Supreme Court, so the country's progress in agricultural development is not held back by several years.

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