

Philippines government scrambles to rewrite biotech regulations as deadline looms

The GLP aggregated and excerpted this blog/article to reflect the diversity of news, opinion and analysis.

A legal challenge to the Philippines' rules on genetically modified organisms is threatening to spark a food crisis in the country and could cloud the outlook for GM technology around Asia.

Government agencies are scrambling to set new regulations on GMOs by Feb. 23 after the Southeast Asian nation's top court late last year demanded an overhaul of existing rules, halting GM planting and issuance of new GM import permits until that was done.

The Supreme Court was acting on a petition by environmental activists led by Greenpeace, with the move likely to be closely watched by governments elsewhere as the Philippines is seen as a trailblazer for GMO.

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With some current import permits starting to expire from March and corn farmers set to begin sowing in May, five government agencies are pushing to sign new rules by [February 23] to avoid disrupting food supply in a year when voters will choose the country's next leader.

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The government said the new rules are expected to tighten environmental scrutiny before biosafety permits are issued, addressing one of the loopholes the Supreme Court cited when it voided the old rules, in place since 2002.

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GMO's critics argue the technology poses risks to public health, while advocates say such fears have not been scientifically proven and that high-yielding genetically altered crops would help ensure food security as the world's population grows.

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Corn farmers are worried they might not be able to plant in May.

"The livelihood of almost 1 million farmers nationwide will be threatened," said Romualdo Elvira Jr., a farmer from the northern province of Bicol.

Read full, original post: [Asia watches as GMO legal challenge threatens Philippines food supply](#)