

Agricultural biotechnology subject to increasing economic espionage threats

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Tim Burrack, a northern Iowa farmer. . .has taken to keeping a wary eye out for unfamiliar vehicles around his 300 acres of genetically modified corn seeds.

Along with other farmers. . . he has upped his vigilance ever since Mo Hailong and six other Chinese nationals were accused by U.S. authorities in 2013 of digging up seeds from Iowa farms and planning to send them back to China.

The case, in which Mo pleaded guilty in January, has laid bare the value — and vulnerability — of advanced food technology in a world with 7 billion mouths to feed, 1.36 billion of them Chinese.

Citing that case and others as evidence of a growing economic and national security threat to America's farm sector, U.S. law enforcement officials are urging agriculture executives and security officers to increase their vigilance and report any suspicious activity.

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Although prosecutors were unable to establish a Chinese government link to Mo's group, the case adds to U.S.-China frictions over what Washington says is increasing economic espionage and trade secret theft by Beijing and its proxies.

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The number of international economic espionage cases referred to the FBI is rising. . .The majority of cases reported involve Chinese nationals, the U.S. law enforcement official told Reuters. In the agriculture sector, organic insecticide, irrigation equipment and rice, along with corn, are all suspected to have been targeted. . .

Read full, original post: [In Iowa corn fields, Chinese national's seed theft exposes vulnerability](#)