

‘Crop of the century’: How GM soybeans unseated ‘king corn’ in the US—with help from China

[Editor's note: [78 percent](#) (91.4 million hectares) of the world's soybean acreage, is genetically modified.]

With planting almost complete, soybeans are likely to have unseated corn as the most [widely sown crop in the US](#), analysts believe.

The soybean has driven deep into Brazil's interior savannah, [Argentina's pampas](#) and the US rural heartlands. Harvests have been big enough to deliver measurable bumps to the economies of Brazil and the US over the past year. In the next decade the ivory oilseed will drive total cropland above 1bn hectares worldwide....

Screen Shot at PM
Image information not available

The triumph of the soybean hinges on incomes in China. The country's imports have trebled in the past decade to an estimated 93m tons in the coming year, equal to 66kg per person annually — or five cargo vessels a day.

...

[The] plant's runaway popularity is down to its unparalleled protein content. Crushed, nearly 80 percent becomes soya meal. Chickens, pigs and fish that eat it fatten fast.

...

China may be the ancestral home of the soybean, but its harvests rarely nudge above 15m tons. The domestic crop costs more to produce than imports, so demand is mainly sustained by a ban on the use of genetically modified crops in everyday foodstuffs.

Screen Shot at PM
Image information not available

No such restriction applies to soya used in animal feed and cooking oil, so they now largely come from foreign crops with bioengineered traits such as pesticide resistance. Chinese leaders opened the door to soybean imports even as they clung to a policy of self-sufficiency in staple food grains.

The GLP aggregated and excerpted this blog/article to reflect the diversity of news, opinion, and analysis. Read full, original post: [Why soyabeans are the crop of the century](#)