

Following Golden Rice approval, Philippines poised to implement rules to accommodate GMO animals, CRISPR crops

The Philippines continues to be a regional biotechnology leader. Golden Rice (GR2E) field tests were harvested in October 2019 and the Application to Propagate is expected soon. The regulatory agencies of the United States, Australia, New Zealand, and Canada have already issued safety and nutrition approvals for GR2E.

Parallel to this are positive regulatory developments that may come to fruition by early 2020, including the completion of an ongoing review of the current biotechnology regulations embodied in the Joint Departmental Circular (JDC) of 2016. Likewise, expected to be in place around the same time are regulatory frameworks for genetically engineered (GE) animals and another for new innovative biotechnologies (e.g. gene editing).

The Philippines is a regional biotechnology leader, having been the first Asian country to allow the planting of a genetically engineered (GE) crop (Bt corn in 2003), and is moving forward on a regulatory framework for GE animals and products of innovative biotechnologies.

A change in GE plant regulations as embodied in Department of Agriculture (DA) Administrative Order No. 8 (DA-AO 8) to the Joint Department Circular (JDC) in April 15, 2016, however, has slowed the processing of biosafety applications. There have been no major trade disruptions and regulatory reforms are underway with a review of the current regulatory regime. Parallel to this are current efforts to have regulatory frameworks covering GE animals, as well as one that will govern products of new innovative biotechnologies (e.g. gene editing). Both are expected in early 2020.

Since its introduction in 2003, GE corn area planted has reached over 7.2 million hectares cumulatively. From March 2018 to February 2019, Philippine farmers planted GE corn on an estimated 660,000 hectares, relatively flat compared to the previous year's level. According to contacts, if the use of counterfeit GE seeds were included, GE corn plantings would be higher.

Meanwhile, the Golden Rice (GR2E) field tests were harvested in October 2019 The respective regulatory agencies of four countries, i.e., the United States, Australia, New Zealand, and Canada, have already issued the safety and nutrition approvals for GR2E.

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