

Despite past warnings from Fidel Castro, Cuba green lights GMO crop cultivation amidst severe food shortages

Cuba officially opened the door to GM crops on [July 23] as a “complement to conventional agriculture”, in the midst of a food crisis and shortages now worsened by the coronavirus health emergency.

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Cuba imports more than 80% of the food consumed by its 11.2 million inhabitants. The chronic shortage that the Caribbean country has suffered for decades has now been aggravated by the health crisis of COVID-19, which has emptied the shelves of state stores and complicated the supply of basic foods.

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The island will apply this policy to corn and soybeans, among other foods, and will try to develop a sugarcane variety resistant to the effects of climate change.

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The decree of the National Commission for the Use of Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs) in Cuban Agriculture regulates “controlled inclusion” and research, development, production, use, and import and export of GMOs.

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Despite the fact that trials to grow GM corn in Cuba began in 2009, genetically modified foods still carry a stigma on the island, in part due to repeated warnings by the late former President Fidel Castro (1926-2016).

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The leader of the Cuban Revolution dedicated his last years to promoting organic agriculture, while harshly criticizing the use of transgenic foods.

[Editor’s note: This story was published in Spanish and has been translated and edited for clarity.]

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