

## Biotech experts push back after week-long protest to block Philippines Golden Rice approval

Golden Rice is any rice variety that has been genetically modified to include two genes (from maize and soil bacteria) to complete the carotenoid pathway and express beta-carotene, a pigment that converts into Vitamin A in the body and is hoped to help with Vitamin A Deficiency (VAD) in countries where rice is a staple food.

It has been under attack from farmer-led groups and anti-GM groups? for several years now, which cite issues ranging from undetermined food safety, environmental safety all the way to 'rice imperialism' by big food corporations, all of which culminated earlier [in September] in a weeklong protest organized by the Stop Golden Rice Network (SGRN).

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"We believe that Golden Rice is an unnecessary and unwanted technology being peddled by corporations purely for their profit-making agenda. [It] will only strengthen the grip of corporations over rice and agriculture and will endanger agrobiodiversity and peoples' health as well,"? said SGRN.

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According to IRRI Program Lead for Healthier Rice Dr Russesll Reinke though, the point of Golden Rice seems to be being missed.

"Up till date, I'm still completely nonplussed about all the pushback against Golden Rice. The ethos here is that we just want to build the beta-carotene into the rice, so consumers can get more Vitamin A every time they eat it, that's all,"? he told FoodNavigator-Asia?.

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