China poised for new great leap forward on backs of new generation of biotech crops

A trial planting of genetically modified corn and soybean crops outside lab settings in multiple sites across China is projected to have a bumper harvest as autumn nears, according to officials from the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs.

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Experts said the trial’s success provides a boon to the country’s fast-aging rural food producers in the run-up to the Chinese Farmers’ Harvest Festival on [September 23], the autumn equinox.

Properties that the crops have gained through gene-editing technologies help reduce the labor needed to manage croplands and pave the way for more efficient, large-scale mechanical farming.

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Official figures showed that China’s demand for soybean has almost tripled since 1996, reaching more than 100 million metric tons last year, as a result of increased consumption of meat in China.

Domestic soybean could only supply 18.5 percent of its needs last year despite recent efforts by the central government to bolster the self-sufficiency of oil crops.

Though having been imported in large amounts for years, GMO corn and soybean are yet to be planted for commercial consumption in China.

Cotton and papaya are the only GMO crops that have been planted commercially in the country so far.

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