



Weekly news from Hanoi, Vietnam

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VIETNAMESE FARMERS SOW THE SEED OF GM CROPS



Vietnamese farmers started to commercially grow genetically modified (GM) corn last year. Since then they have extended their crops to roughly 100,000 hectares (247,000 acres), according to the Ministry of Rural Development and Agriculture, ranking the country 23rd on the list of 29 countries that allow GM crops.

Around 200 tons of GM corn has gone onto the market so far this year, official statistics show. Vietnam plans to cover 30-50 percent of the country's farmland with GM crops by 2020.

The government officially allowed mass farming of GM corn for animal feed in March 2015 to reduce its reliance on foreign suppliers.

Vietnamese livestock producers reportedly use about 60 million tons of corn for animal feed per year.

Statistics show the country almost doubled its corn imports to 7 million tons last year from 3.75 million tons in 2014, mainly from the world's top producers of GM crops like Brazil and Argentina.

Currently, 54 percent of GM crops are grown in developing countries, said Duong Hoa Xo, head of the Biotechnology Center in Ho Chi Minh City.

Genetically modified crops are being adopted around the world, Xo said, adding that farmers are benefiting from the crops.

A report on GM crops grown in southern Vietnam shows that productivity has increased by between 16.5 percent and 25 percent compared to non-GM crops.

Vietnamese farmers are using three varieties of genetically-modified corn supplied by the Swiss firm Syngenta.

Agriculture officials said the three varieties are resistant to pests and produce higher yields.

Vietnamese authorities have also issued bio-safety certificates for corn varieties supplied by bio-tech giant Monsanto, enabling farmers to use such GM seeds to commercially cultivating the crops. Other varieties are expected to be certified soon.

(<http://e.vnexpress.net/>- Oct 2559)

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