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China to Implement New Regulation on Organic Food Accreditation

Chinese government is soon to officially implement a new regulation on organic food accreditation and the national standard of organic food.

The accreditation regulation and national standard will take effect since April 1st. The committee members of the national accreditation monitoring board will manage the national organic food accreditation based on a consolidated principle and accreditation process. The state media says the new regulation marks a new phase of the country's organic product accreditation.

China's organic product accreditation has been quite disordered, with extreme cases including producers pay for organic product accreditation. The food quality regulators said that the new regulation could contribute to improving the quality of organic food, protecting consumer's rights and the environment protection.

Sun Fengying, chief of accreditation monitoring department of Kunshan Inspection and Quarantine Bureau in Jiangsu province said that the consumers should look for organic products that bear logo of "China Organic Product" in Chinese or "Organic" in English. Accreditation institutions will give an unique number to organic products that are up to standard, by which the customers can look

China Updates is a service provided by U.S.-China Health Products Association. The Newsletters are issued approximately three times a month. China Updates provides news on regulatory environment, new legislation, association activities and any information related to China's natural health products industry.

for detailed information of the products.

Related information includes the production base, processed companies and applied technology. If the related companies provide inaccurate information, they cannot submit organic product accreditation application in the next five years. (Source: Xinhua net)

China to Strengthen Food Safety Inspection

The CFDA recently asked the local food and drug regulators to launch specific campaigns to address food safety issue.

The campaigns should focus on targeted food including infant formula milk powder and food, dairy product, meat product, beverage, edible vegetable oil and food additives.

The regulators are asked to inspect the production approval, process control and sales channel in efforts to secure food safety from the source. All inspections on infant formula must be done by June.

The regulators are asked to broaden inspection to food workshop, small cafeteria, street vendor and small grocery store. The campaign also includes large food production enterprise, large restaurant and large food wholesales food market. Large companies are asked to take lead to foster positive company culture and secure food safety, winning consumer's confidence towards food safety. (Source: Xinhua.net)

Chinese Regulator is expected to Cancel Administrative Approval of Health Product

Health product is listed among "no-administrative-approval" category which was released by the CFDA, causing heated debate in China's health product industry.

The possible cancellation raised expectation of health product to avoid the administrative approval, which was a necessity for a product to be officially permitted to sell as health product in China. The logo of health food in China is presented by a "blue hat".

The concept of health food dates from 1996 in China. The local authority has since implemented strict administrative approval process towards health food and related instruction book.

The CFDA holds examining session at the end of each quarter to process application of health food. Qualified applicants will be granted with health food approval certificate. Imported and domestic health products are issued with registration numbers from separate systems.

After the submission of updated version of the food safety law last year, whether or not to cancel the administrative approval has been picked up by the industry people. Some think the cancellation of administrative approval will invalidate the health food approval certificate. It is said to bring fundamental transition to this industry.

"Health food is functional product, which demands approval," said deputy secretary of China Health Product Association. "The function of the health food cannot be decided by the company, and it should be acknowledged by the government."



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“If there is anything wrong with the health product, the government should take responsibility to address the problem,” he said.

“If the administrative approval gets cancelled, I will increase my investment into the industry,” said an investor in the drug and health product industry. “Companies usually have to wait for two to three years and shuffle from Beijing and the registered place for so many times to get everything, from equipment to production environment, registered and approved by the government.” (Source: Southern Metropolitan Daily)

Illegally Grown GM Crops Mount Chinese Dining Table: Cui Yongyuan

Chinese consumers are unwittingly eating illegally grown genetically modified crops, a former television talk show host claimed yesterday.



GM corn and rice is being grown illegally on a large scale in central China's Hunan and Hubei provinces, Jiangxi Province in the east and northeastern province Jilin, said Cui Yongyuan, best-known for China Central Television (CCTV) shows.

While genetic modification in crops can provide resistance to disease, pesticides and climatic conditions, opponents say risks have not been adequately identified.

"The reality is that many (illegally grown) GM products have entered our food chain," Cui said yesterday.

He is now demanding answers from the Ministry of Agriculture.

"The ministry should respond to my survey results, or it will lose face," Cui said.

He said China has never approved widescale planting of GM crops, only permitting small experimental trials.

GM seeds intended for trials should not be available for general use, but illegal planting has taken place, with the crops finding their way onto the market, said Cui.

Cui said that he spent more than a million yuan (US\$162,654) carrying out surveys around China, the United States and Japan over six months.

He plans to broadcast the resulting documentary.



The Ministry of Agriculture did not respond to Cui's claims yesterday.

While Cui's claims concern illegally grown GM crops, Chinese consumers use legally grown imported GM products on an everyday basis.

"In China, more than half of cooking oil used is soybean oil, and 90 percent of that is made from GM soybeans," said Wang Xiaoyu, deputy secretary general of the soybean association in northeastern province Heilongjiang.

The country imports GM soybean, corn, cotton, rape and sugar beet - with soybean the largest import.

China imported 58.38 million tons of soybean last year, with most GM varieties used as raw material for oil.

Globally, 81 percent of the soybeans cultivated are GM varieties, according to the International Service for the Acquisition of Agri-biotech Applications, a monitoring group funded by the biotechnology industry.

But while China requires strict labeling for GM produce, often this is flouted.

Meanwhile, 61 members of the Chinese Academy of Sciences and the Chinese Academy of Engineering have written to the government, urging it to roll out a GM rice cultivation program. (Source: en.ce.cn)



China Seeks Its Own GMO-Food Path

China has long faced unfavorable food math: It feeds a fifth of the world's population on a seventh of its available land—and not the world's most fertile, Beijing often complains. So the question in global agriculture markets has often been, Why not speed up use of genetically modified food?

Part of the answer came Thursday. China is trying to get in the GMO market, but is keener to develop its own technologies to meet rising agriculture demand, the country's agriculture minister said at the national parliament.

China already allows some GMO imports, including in its sensitive grain category, but not for human consumption—only as animal feed. The population remains skeptical about allowing more.

The minister's comment possibly explains why it has taken the government so long to approve the commercial distribution of GMO grains domestically—the government appears to be busy working on made-in-China technologies. ("GMO" is "genetically modified organism"—for example, corn that has had its genetic blueprint artificially re-engineered to become insect-resistant.)

The government will pursue its own research and development of genetically modified food, though it remains "cautious" on the distribution of GMO products, Agriculture Minister Han Changfu said at a press conference on Thursday. Given a lack of natural resources, he said, China has to promote scientific development to meet its grain-security needs.

"We can't have such techniques monopolized by others," he said.

Developed economies dominate GMO research, Mr. Han said, but China is catching up in some areas.

The government has stepped up a public-relations campaign that could pave the way for full approval for commercial production of these politically sensitive crops. Since last year, the agriculture ministry and other state agencies have been putting a positive spin on GMO foods, whether issuing statements (such as

one congratulating a researcher for a cucumber breakthrough) or staging publicity events (such as a rice taste test.)

The government will step up its supervision of GMO products and crack down on any illegal production of GMO seeds, he said.



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Last year China blocked an unprecedented amount of U.S. corn imports for violating its ban on certain types of genetically modified food, illustrating the difficulty big biotechnology companies face in tapping the country's potentially vast market.

There has been a fervent debate about the use of genetically modified crops, even in a country with ever-expanding food needs. An agricultural official claimed to local media that eating genetically modified soybeans increases the risk of cancer. Defense strategists have expressed concerns that reliance on foreign GMO grains food creates a strategic vulnerability.

But, Mr. Han said, some of these fears are overwrought.

Asked whether he eats GMO foods, he said he does—"mostly soybeans and soybean-oil products." And all GMOs, he declared, are under strict government supervision to ensure safety. (Source: WSJ)

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