GMO Rice Approved While Other GMO Grasses Cannot Be Contained

On May 24, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) became the third major regulatory agency this year to approve Golden Rice for consumption – the same rice that the FDA just said offers no nutritional benefits:

> *The FDA has determined that no health claims can be made for Golden Rice, the genetically engineered (GE) rice meant to contain beta-carotene. The amount of the nutrient it contains is so low that it fails to qualify for a nutrient claim – and it rapidly degrades in storage. Most GE crops currently on the market are engineered to withstand herbicide exposure, but Golden Rice has been the poster-child for the biotech industry, engineered to provide improved nutrition. Wild plants at the side of the field, now largely gone due to increased pesticide use, traditionally provided beta-carotene in developing countries." – Cornucopia*

The company says the most important approvals, the Philippines and Bangladesh, are yet to come. These countries are where the rice is said to have the greatest potential for positive impact.

Golden Rice has been genetically modified to help prevent blindness in undernourished children. The International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) has been working since 2006 to develop a strain of rice that produces beta-carotene, an orange or red plant pigment found in carrots, sweet potatoes, and cantaloupe. The human body converts beta-carotene into vitamin A. One serving of Golden Rice is said to supply half the recommended daily intake of vitamin A. The company hopes to release the genetically modified rice for production in

parts of Africa and Southeast Asia where hundreds of millions of people are poverty-stricken and suffering from malnutrition with vitamin-A deficiencies. A lack of vitamin A can cause blindness and early death.

Golden Rice has been the source of much controversy, stemming from its status as a genetically modified (GM) crop.

Golden Rice has been around for a long time. It's different from other types of rice because its DNA has been altered so that the plant produces Vitamin A, as opposed to the many other GMOs that are being produced in an effort to sell more RoundUp.

Now that the U.S. has become the fourth nation to approve golden rice, others may follow. The U.S. is part of an international body that forms recommendations about food safety that other countries can adopt if they lack their own version of the FDA. Though three other nations have approved golden rice, they might have a tough time winning over the 186 other countries that have a say in international food standards – all of which have been silent on the crop.

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Unapproved GMO Creeping Bentgrass Loose In Oregan

A variety of creeping bentgrass sold by Scotts (owned by Bayer, formerly Monsanto) and engineered to tolerate the herbicide Roundup, has been found in Idaho. The U.S. Department of Agriculture, which vets most new genetically engineered products, had not approved the plant's release. But in 2010, landowners discovered it growing in great mats throughout the irrigation system that stretches like a spider web across Malheur County.

Creeping bentgrass thrives in canals and ditches, where it collects sediment and impedes water flow, and it has proved difficult to control. No one believes the bentgrass can be fully eradicated. Many fear it could contaminate non-GMO crops and invade natural areas. Scotts has tried to rein in its escapee, with some recent success. But in a series of decisions over the last several years, the USDA has relieved Scotts of future responsibility in return for the company's promise not to market the grass.

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Canada's Rogue GMO Wheat Problem

Genetically modified RoundUp-ready wheat was discovered last summer in Alberta, Canada, near a rural road after it was sprayed with herbicide and did not die. GMO wheat has not been approved anywhere for commercial production. Wheat is big money to Canada, and the country is one of the world's largest wheat exporters. Canadian government officials said they did a lot of testing and said the genetically modified wheat is not present in the grain or seed supply.

> *The government is going to provide information to allow our trading partners to make informed, science-based decisions to continue trading in Canadian wheat." – Kathleen Donohue, executive director of market access at Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada.*

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Even though officials say the wheat wasn't in a farmer's field or the food chain, Japan promptly closed its markets to all Canadian wheat right after they heard the news. South Korea followed suit. South Korea is a much smaller market, but it's considered an important emerging one.

Last year, Japan bought $203 million worth of wheat from Alberta. Japan was the second-most lucrative market for Alberta wheat in the last two years, and in 2016, Japan was actually their biggest customer, buying even more wheat than the Americans.

> *Personally, I just see it as an overreaction because there is no health risk even it was in the commercial system. There's no safety risk whatsoever." – Kevin Bender, Alberta Wheat Commission chair*

Japan imports about 1.5 million tonnes of wheat a year and is known to buy some of the highest-quality grain at premium prices, according to Cereals Canada president Cam Dahl. He also stated:

> *I am confident that we have the answers that Korea is looking for just as I'm very confident that we have the answers that Japan is looking for."*

But even if Canada were somehow able to reign in all traces of wheat and completely get a handle on the outbreak and assure Japan that there is nothing to fear, it's still not likely to be able to hop right back into the market. It took 10 years to get trade barriers lifted after the Japanese banned Canadian beef when cows in Alberta were discovered with mad cow disease.

Sources:

- *GM golden rice gets approval from food regulators in the US* – New Scientist
- *Embattled GMO Golden Rice Is Now Allowed in US Food Supply* – Futurism
- *GMO grass is creeping across Oregon* – High Country News
- *GMO grass is creeping across Oregon* – Huffington Post
- *The mystery of Alberta's rogue GMO wheat puts our*

reputation at risk — Edmonton Journal