



■ Large-scale cultivation of GM crops remains sensitive as environmentalists warn against the technology's long-term effects on biodiversity and human health

SHUTTERSTOCK

# China will now help grow GM corn, other crops

Agence France-Presse

**BEIJING:** China will "facilitate" the planting of genetically modified corn and other plants on an industrial scale in the next five years, officials said, after not authorising any new commercial GM crops for a decade.

The controversial science is a key trade issue with the US, whose biotechnology giant Monsanto is a global leader in the field, while its rival Syngenta has agreed a \$43 billion takeover offer by Chinese state-owned firm ChemChina.

Only two GM crops are currently commercially cultivated in the country—a type of cotton approved in 1996, and a virus resistant papaya authorised in 2006.

GM soya, corn, cotton and rape can be imported as raw materials and as ingredients in processed products. Processed sugar beet imports are also allowed.

Beijing is pro-biotechnology as it has long been concerned over the world's most populous country's ability to feed itself—a fear that factored into the introduction of its controversial one-child policy.

But large-scale cultivation of GM crops remains sensitive as environmentalists and some scientists warn against the technology's as-yet-unknown long-term

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consequences for biodiversity and human health.

"During the 13th five-year plan, we will... push forward the industrialisation of major products including new types of insect-resistant cotton and corn," Liao Xiyuan, a senior official with the Chinese agriculture ministry, told reporters.

Corn is the top grain in China by both production and sown area—much of it used for animal feed—with rice only in second place, followed by wheat, official data shows.

The government will continue research on GM rice and wheat over the next five years, Liao said.

GM crops are sometimes found being grown illegally in the country and Liao said had authorities "rooted out" GM rice in the central province of Hubei. Last year they also destroyed a total of 73 hectares of GM corn in several areas.