



USDA Foreign Agricultural Service

GAIN Report

Global Agriculture Information Network

Template Version 2.09

Voluntary Report - public distribution

Date: 4/28/2006

GAIN Report Number: NL6015

Netherlands

Biotechnology

Dutch Government supports GM crop research

2006

Approved by:

Roger Wentzel
U.S. Embassy, The Hague

Prepared by:

Bob Flach

Report Highlights: The Dutch Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality tasked the Wageningen University to develop a genetically modified (GM) potato with resistance to late blight (*Phytophthora infestans*). Six field trials with the GM maize hybrid Mon810 will be conducted this year to establish the size of buffer zones for coexistence purposes.

Includes PSD Changes: No
Includes Trade Matrix: No
Unscheduled Report
The Hague [NL1]
[NL]

In a press release of March 31, 2006, the Dutch Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality stated that they tasked the Wageningen University to develop a genetically modified (GM) potato with resistance to late blight (*Phytophthora infestans*). The Dutch Government pays the project costs of Euro 9.9 million from the Economic Structural Fund (FES).

COGEM approved field trials with the GM potatoes.

The Netherlands Commission on Genetic Modification (COGEM) advised the Dutch Government about the risks of field experiments with the GM potato. COGEM concluded that the risk of cross breeding with other potato breeds is limited as potatoes are vegetatively propagated and potato tubers do not survive the Dutch winter. COGEM concluded that the risks for humans and the environment are negligible.

The new GM potato breed will have huge potential benefits for the Dutch sector.

According to the press release of the Dutch Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality, potato farming accounts for 80 percent of the fungicides used in The Netherlands. The Ministry reports that production of the new potato breed will require only half the level of the fungicides used for conventional potatoes. If the GM potato is successfully grown on a wide scale it would save the Dutch potato sector about Euro 150 million annually. For developing the GM potato, exclusively potato genes will be used. The primary objective is to use the research results for developing GM starch potatoes for the non-food market. But breeders could also use the research results for developing GM table potatoes. The project will take about ten years.

Cumbersome regulations and activists impede field trials.

Until today, successful experimental planting of biotech crops is almost impossible in The Netherlands. Crop trials are either effectively prevented by cumbersome regulations imposed by the Dutch government or impeded by the threat of protests from environmental groups. In July 2005, Dutch activists destroyed field trials with GM starch potatoes developed by the starch company Avebe. This GM potato breed contained an elevated content of amylopectin. The Dutch government has issued over 30 licenses for field trials of biotech crops. In 2006, only seven of these licenses are being used: five for field experiments with GM potatoes, one with GM apples, and one with GM flowers (carnation).

Corn trials will confirm buffer zone requirements.

Starting this week, six one-hectare field trials of the GM maize hybrid Mon810 will be conducted. The goal of these trials is to double-check the necessary buffer zones with conventional and organic maize crops. The Dutch Commission for Primary Sector Coexistence has previously determined the buffer zones for conventional and organic crops to be 25 meters and 250 meters, respectively. For these trials no license is needed as this maize breed is approved in the EU.

Rules on coexistence for growing GM potatoes and corn are in place.

On November 2, 2004, the Commission for Primary Sector Coexistence presented an agreement for coexistence to the Dutch Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality. The commission was set up to represent all sectors of Dutch agriculture. The agreement is set within the framework of the EC Directives 2001/18/EC and 2003/556/EC, and Dutch Civil Law. The agreement covers rules and regulations for the production of three products: potatoes, sugar beets and maize (see also GAIN Report Number: NL4033 and NL5028). The Dutch sector still needs to reach agreement on the scope of a compensation fund for possible damage to conventional and organic crops, and a monitoring system in the field.