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Venezuela

Agricultural Biotechnology Annual

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Report Highlights:
The Government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela (GBRV) bans the use and research of modern biotechnology-derived agriculture.

Section I. Executive Summary:
Despite interest in biotechnology by Venezuelan researchers and farmers to meet growing food demand, there is no commercial adoption of the technology. All domestic production of corn is with conventional seed. A Seed Law from December 2015 bans plant biotechnology research and the use of biotech seeds in agricultural production, hindering any real technological progress and improvements in productivity.

Section II. PLANT AND ANIMAL BIOTECHNOLOGY

CHAPTER 1: PLANT BIOTECHNOLOGY

PART A: PRODUCTION AND TRADE

a) PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT: Not applicable

b) COMMERCIAL PRODUCTION:
There are officially no commercial biotechnology crops cultivated or under research and development in Venezuela. The GBRV has banned planting of biotechnology derived, or genetically engineered (GE), agriculture despite significant interest from farmers, agro-industry, academic institutes, and university researchers in developing the potential of animal and agricultural biotechnology. The only ongoing biotechnology research is in molecular genetics and tissue culture conducted by universities with minimal private sector and/or government involvement. Given there is no production of agricultural biotechnology, there are no exports of biotech-derived products.

c) EXPORTS: Not applicable.

d) IMPORTS: Venezuela is a significant importer of biotech-derived soybeans, soybean meal, soybean and vegetable oil, and corn. The table below provides data on the volumes of likely GE imports of soybeans, corn and derived products, from January through June 2018:

Country	Soybeans and Products (Metric Tons)	Corn and Products (Metric Tons)
U.S.A.	293,000	330,000
Mexico	13,000	510,000
Brazil	70,000	34,000
Argentina	133,000	31,000
Paraguay	40,000	0
Total	**549,000**	**905,000**

Source: Global Trade Atlas

e) FOOD AID: Not applicable.

f) TRADE BARRIERS:

On December 28 2015, the Government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela (GBRV) published a law banning the use and research of modern biotechnology in agriculture. This law also prohibits the production, import, use, release and multiplication of GE or transgenic seeds. The law also prohibits the granting of copyright protections and patents on any type of seed, whether conventional or otherwise. Violators of this law can be subject to sanctions ranging from fines to imprisonment.

PART B: POLICY

a) REGULATORY FRAMEWORK:

Agricultural biotechnology policy and regulations are managed by Venezuela's Ministry of Eco-Socialism and Water (MINEA http://www.minea.gob.ve). MINEA's Directorate of Bio-security and Bio-commerce is responsible for administering and regulating genetic resources, bio-security, and encouraging related activities that enhance the use of biodiversity. Among the specific functions of the office are:

- Evaluate all issues related to biotechnology and bio-security as well as traditional knowledge associated to biological diversity;
- Enter into contracts to provide access to genetic resources.

Research and investigation for non-agricultural (medical) biotechnology that do not involve gene insertion or modification. The Seed Law of December 2015 (www.inia.gob.ve/images/documentos/Ley_de_semilla_2016.pdf) effectively bans any transgenic or modern biotechnology research in agriculture. The Seed Law was created by the National Seed Commission (CONASEM), under the authority of the National Institute of Agricultural Research (INIA http://www.inia.gob.ve), which has among its functions the registration and certification of seeds allowed by law.

Specifically, the Seed Law prohibits the use, application and research in modern agricultural biotechnology. According to the law, the following techniques are prohibited:

- In vitro nucleic acid techniques, including the recombinant DNA technique and the direct injection of nucleic acids into cells or organelles.
- The fusion of cells of species beyond the taxonomic family, which exceed the natural barriers of reproduction or recombination and are not techniques used in traditional reproduction and selection.

This Seed Law also prohibits the production, import, use, release and multiplication of genetically engineered (GE) seeds. In addition, the law prohibits the granting of copyright protection and patents on any type of biotechnology seed. Violators of this law can be subject to a variety of sanctions, including fines and imprisonment. The GBRV's socialist ideology has influenced the regulatory decisions of the government as the GBRV opposes the obtaining of private profits from research in biotechnology and the commercialization of its results.

Currently, a new seed law that will allow and promote the research and use of seeds obtained through modern biotechnology is being discussed in the national assembly, controlled by opposition political parties. It will also recognize international agreements on intellectual property and breeders' rights over biological organisms.

b) APPROVALS:
There are no approved plants or crops for cultivation or exports in Venezuela. Imports of GE crops or processed products are not restricted.

c) STACKED or PYRAMIDED EVENT APPROVALS: Not applicable.
d) FIELD TESTING: Not applicable
e) INNOVATIVE BIOTECHNOLOGIES: Not applicable.
f) COEXISTANCE: Not applicable.
g) LABELING: Not applicable
h) MONITORING AND TESTING: No testing at this time.
i) LOW LEVEL PRESENCE (LLP) POLICY: No LLP policy.
j) ADDITIONAL REGULATORY REQUIREMENTS: Not applicable.
k) INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY RIGHTS (IPR): Not applicable.

l) CARTAGENA BIOSAFETY PROTOCOL (CBP) RATIFICATION:
Venezuela signed the CBP on May 24, 2000, and ratified the agreement on September 11, 2003. A reference laboratory for the detection of genetically modified organisms is located in the city of Maracay, but is not yet operational. To date, there is no impact on trade from the CBP.

m) INTERNATIONAL TREATIES/FORA: Venezuela is a member of Codex Alimentarius. The GBRV representation to Codex is through the Ministry of Industry and Commerce's National Autonomous Service for Norms, Quality, Metrology and Technical Regulations (http://www.sencamer.gob.ve/sencamer/documents/codex.htm).
Venezuela is a member of The International Plant Protection Convention. The GBRV representation to IPPC is through Ministry of Agriculture and Land's National Institute of Agricultural Health (INSAI http://www.insai.gob.ve).

n) RELATED ISSUES: None.

PART C: MARKETING

a) PUBLIC/PRIVATE OPINIONS:
The government maintains public campaigns in traditional and social media against GMOs and the "dangers" of its use for the environment and as food. Private entities such as the Venezuelan Federation of Agricultural Producers and the Venezuelan Cattlemen Federation constantly perform public appearances and opinions favoring the use of agricultural biotechnologies in order to enhance their production levels and capabilities.

b) MARKET ACCEPTANCE/STUDIES:
Despite the GBRV's prohibition of marketing or development of agricultural biotechnology, Venezuelan producers continue to express the need for, and acceptance of, biotech-derived products. The Venezuelan Federation of Agricultural Producers forecasts that domestic production could double in two years if a regulatory framework for agricultural biotechnology allowed the use of biotech-derived seeds. Other producer groups have criticized the government for not allowing the use of agricultural biotechnology to the detriment of domestic production. Consumers have not voiced any significant concerns about biotechnology or products containing biotechnology raw

materials. Venezuela imports significant volumes of biotech-derived soybeans, soybean meal, soybean and vegetable oil, and corn from primarily the United States, Brazil, and Argentina.

CHAPTER 2: ANIMAL BIOTECHNOLOGY

PART D: PRODUCTION AND TRADE

a) PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT
There are no animal biotechnology events under development in Venezuela, and the government has not granted approval for animal biotechnology from any source. There is significant interest by research centers and universities in developing animal biotechnology to improve the quality of cattle, goats and hogs in Venezuela. Currently, the biotechnology technique applied in genetic improvement of cattle is in-vitro fertilization and embryo transfer. This technique is offered commercially by several companies that use Brazilian biotechnology.
The use of modern animal biotechnology techniques is less developed. There is no research on animal cloning techniques in public or private institutions, nor is there any use of this technique as a tool for genetic improvement. Applying modern animal biotechnology has been restricted almost exclusively to the diagnosis of diseases, mainly viral in nature. To date, the information obtained has been based on vaccine produced abroad, not domestically.

b) COMMERCIAL PRODUCTION: Not applicable.
c) EXPORTS: Not applicable.
d) IMPORTS: Not applicable.
e) TRADE BARRIERS: Not applicable.

PART E: POLICY

a) REGULATORY FRAMEWORK:
There is no policy regulating animal biotechnology, therefore no government entities are responsible for regulating genetically engineered animals or livestock clones, food safety, animal welfare and environmental safety issues. Animal biotechnology is referred to in the 2002 Law for Seed, Animal Reproductive Material, and Biological Inputs (http://www.wipo.int/edocs/lexdocs/laws/es/ve/ve047es.pdf); however, no regulations were implemented to address research and commercial development of the technology.

b) INNOVATIVE BIOTECHNOLOGIES: No regulation at this time.
c) LABELING AND TRACEABILITY: Not applicable.
d) INTELECTUAL PROPERTY RIGHTS (IPR): Not applicable.
e) INTERNATIONAL TREATIES/FOR A: Not applicable.

PART F: MARKETING

a) PUBLIC/PRIVATE OPINIONS:
There is no information about public or private sector opinions on the use of livestock cloning, GE and/or genome edited animals.

b) MARKET ACCEPTANCE/STUDIES:

The Venezuelan livestock sector routinely uses advanced techniques of genetic improvement through in vitro fertilization and embryo transfer. As a result, the sector maintains a favorable attitude to any technological innovations that help to improve production and operations.