

USDA Foreign Agricultural Service

# GAIN Report

Global Agricultural Information Network

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## Morocco

### Agricultural Biotechnology Annual

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**Report Highlights:**

Genetically-engineered plants and animals are under development but not commercially produced in Morocco. In trade, Morocco continues to take advantage of agricultural biotechnology resources, particularly to support its development as a competitive livestock and poultry producer.

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## Section I. Executive Summary

Morocco neither produces nor allows importation of agricultural products derived from biotechnology for human consumption. Although, biotech commodities such as GE corn, soybeans and soybean meal are imported for animal feed.

While a formal biosafety framework is absent, Morocco's [National Office for Food Safety \(ONSSA\)](#), located within the [Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, Rural Development, Water, and Forests](#), is the competent authority in charge of implementing regulations and agreements related to biotechnology. In September 2012, the Ministry [published](#) guidance to clarify Morocco's position on genetically-engineered (GE) products, which effectively states that Morocco follows the precautionary principle in respect to justifying the ban on GE products from local cultivation and from their presence in products for human consumption while simultaneously recognizing their international presence and acceptance as an animal feed source.

Under ONSSA's oversight, agricultural biotechnology activities in Morocco remain active but limited largely to research with no developed GE products having been commercialized for local production.

In trade, Morocco continues to take advantage of agricultural biotechnology resources, particularly to support its development as a competitive livestock and poultry producer. Imports of biotech seeds for planting are currently not allowed into Morocco and a "GMO-free" certificate is required for customs clearance.

## Section II. Plant and Animal Biotechnology

### CHAPTER 1: PLANT BIOTECHNOLOGY

#### PART A: PRODUCTION AND TRADE

**a) Product Development:** Morocco is actively engaged in agricultural biotechnology research and development as a means for addressing the country's food security challenges. This work is led by the [National Agronomic Research Institute \(INRA\)](#) and focused on finding solutions for Morocco's major crops, including cereals, forage, date palm, citrus, and olives.

For the list of required documents and cost for ONSSA to issue variety approval (see [link](#))

**b) Commercial Production:** None.

**c) Exports:** Not applicable.

**d) Imports:** Morocco is a major importer of soy products (\$608 million; Americas-18% market share), corn products (\$533 million; Americas-32%), and sugar products (\$605 million; Brazil-80%) while a lesser importer of rapeseed products (\$20 million; Canada-5%), cotton products (\$18 million; Spain-54%), and alfalfa products (\$7 million; US-14%). Imported feed ingredients are a necessity for Morocco's livestock and poultry production, which Morocco also plans to expand. Demand for imported sugar has been supported by government subsidies at the retail level, though they are being phased out.

*Official USDA Production, Supply, and Distribution Estimates, MY 2018/2019*

Commodity	Production	Imports	Exports	Domestic Consumption	Unit Description
Corn	150	2,600	0	2,800	(1,000 MT)
Oilseed, Soybean	0	120	0	120	(1,000 MT)
Meal, Soybean	94	575	0	675	(1,000 MT)
Oil, Soybean	22	515	23	515	(1,000 MT)
Oilseed, Rapeseed	1	0	0	1	(1,000 MT)
Meal, Rapeseed	1	75	0	77	(1,000 MT)
Oil, Rapeseed	0	8	0	8	(1,000 MT)
Sugar, Centrifugal	615	1,163	450	1,318	(1,000 MT)
Cotton	1	45	0	45	(1,000 480-lb Bales)

Source: [FAS/PSD online](#)

**e) Food Aid:** Not applicable. Morocco is neither a recipient nor provider of food aid.

**f) Trade Barriers:** Morocco bans GE products from local cultivation and from products for human consumption. See Policy/Regulatory Framework below.

## **PART B: POLICY**

### ***a) Regulatory Framework:***

The legal foundation on which the Ministry of Agriculture regulates GE products was originally based on an internal memorandum, dated August 1999, which imposed a blanket prohibition on imports of biotechnology products and included no details on the product coverage, certification, testing, or threshold levels. This two-paragraph memo, signed by subordinates from the Ministry of Agriculture, was issued at a time when various food safety and health related issues (GE, BSE, Dioxin, FMD, etc.) were dominating headlines in Europe. The memorandum initially raised concerns because of the uncertainties of its implementation but those concerns diminished over time.

In 2008, the Ministry of Agriculture sent a draft law relevant to the introduction, use, and marketing of biotech products to various other ministries for review; however, it was rescinded in 2011 for further revision by the Ministry of Agriculture and has since remained dormant.

In September 2012, the Ministry of Agriculture published the following on its [website](#):

#### ***“Transgenic foods banned for human consumption in Morocco”***

*“Following the study conducted by French researchers suggesting the dangerousness of the consumption of certain transgenic maize (GMO) and whose results are being verified within the European Union, the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries Maritime wishes to provide the following clarifications:*

*In Morocco, under the precautionary principle, transgenic foods are banned for human consumption. No presence of GMOs is allowed in imported products intended for human consumption, they are absent in the national agricultural production and also in all the inputs used in Moroccan agricultural crops (seeds, etc.).*

*Practice and legislation around the world admit their presence in certain foods for animal feed. It should be noted that the transgenic maize varieties targeted by the French study are not authorized in Morocco for animal feed purposes.*

*The European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) has taken the published study to verify its content and veracity. The Ministry of Agriculture and Maritime Fisheries remains vigilant regarding any new development.”*

#### **National Biosafety Committee (NBC)**

To date, Morocco does not have a legislative or regulatory framework related to biotechnology, either for domestic production or imports of GE commodities. In October 2011, Morocco’s National Office for Food Safety (ONSSA) became the competent government authority in charge of implementing regulations and agreements related to biotechnology, formerly the function of the National Biosafety Committee (NBC). Consequently, the role of the NBC was significantly diminished. The NBC was created in April 2005 to provide counseling on the use, handling, transportation, import, distribution and marketing of biotech organisms. The responsibilities of the NBC encompass national policy, risk assessment, legal framework, and research.

In 2012, the Moroccan Institute of Code of Standardization published a [Halal Code of Standards](#) which states:

### **5.10 Genetically Modified Foods**

- *Genetically modified organisms (GMOs), ingredients or products containing GMOs should not be produced by the use of non-Halal genetic material (For example, because pork is prohibited, by extension, any products made from genetically altered pigs are prohibited too).*

- *Genetically modified foods that are produced by the transfer of genes from other living species to a plant, an animal and a microbiological source through genetic modification technologies and modifications that are made in the DNA of foods, may be used for Halal food production.*

In 2010, ONSSA issued a [Code of Procedures](#) for seed potato imports which requires a “ non-GMO” certificate.

In 2014, ONSSA issued a [Code of Procedures](#) for animal feed which states;

*For additives derived from biotechnology techniques based on genetically modified organisms (GMO), an official commitment of the manufacturer confirming the total destruction of GMOs at the end of the manufacturing process.*

**[Loi n°28-07](#)** « Sécurité Sanitaire des produits alimentaires » (food safety):

- Art. 6 on controls on imported food products
- Art. 3 on the precautionary principle

**[Loi n°39-12](#)** « Production biologique des produits agricoles et aquatique » (Organic production of agriculture and fisheries products).

- Art. 11 prohibition of GMOs

### **[Morocco Halal Labelling](#)**

- 3.8 Genetically Modified Foods (GMFs)

**b) Approvals:** The basic Moroccan law on crops is the [Decree # 1-69-169](#), dated July 25, 1969, which regulates seed production and marketing. The law is silent on GE seeds however; Morocco is requiring a certificate of non-GMO for approval of new domestic plant varieties. See [lines 89-94](#).

**c) Stacked or Pyramided Event Approvals:** Not Applicable.

**d) Field Testing:** ONSSA has not permitted open field-testing of GE crops.

**e) Innovative Biotechnologies:** None.

**f) Coexistence:** Not applicable.

**g) Labeling:** GE labeling is not required in Morocco. However, on several occasions, European customers and consumer groups have requested from their Moroccan suppliers that exported products be free from GE products (e.g., vegetable oil in canned sardines, tomatoes, etc.). For

consumer products entering Morocco, a GE-free label may be included to avoid potentially being asked to provide a GE-free certificate.

**h) Monitoring and Testing:** Morocco has a history of partnering with EU laboratories especially France.

**i) Low Level Presence (LLP) Policy:** Not applicable.

**j) Additional Regulatory Requirements:** Not applicable.

**k) Intellectual Property Right (IPR):** Available on ONSSA's [website](#) and summarized in a GAIN [report](#), in 1997, Morocco issued its basic [law #9-94](#) for IPR of plant variety protection, later enforced on October 28, 2002, with the publication of various implementing orders. In April 2018, ONSSA has published a Bulletin [No.29](#) regarding a summary of plant varieties that had undergone consideration for protection but with no reference made to GE-products.

**l) Cartagena Protocol Ratification:** Morocco signed the Cartagena Protocol in May 2000, ratified it on April 25, 2011, and it entered into force on July 24, 2011. The Ministry of Energy, Mining, Water and Environment is the focal point, which serves as a liaison for information and compliance. In October 2011, ONSSA took charge of the implementation of the Cartagena protocol. On February 15, 2013, Morocco published its [National Biosafety Framework](#), but has not established a corresponding legal framework.

On December 9, 2011 Morocco signed the Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit-sharing. The Moroccan Government Council and the Ministerial Council approved the Protocol on March 22 and June 17, 2012, respectively; however, the Government of Morocco has yet to ratify it.

**m) International Treaties/Fora:** Morocco is a member of the WTO, the IPPC, and the Codex Alimentarius.

**n) Related Issues:** None

## **PART C: MARKETING**

**a) Public/Private Opinions:** Moroccan researchers are largely aware of biotechnology's promise to help Morocco alleviate national food security challenges. Meanwhile, policymakers, while open to finding pragmatic solutions, will look to follow Europe for the foreseeable future.

**b) Market Acceptance:** Morocco's biggest challenge in biotechnology is the misconception that acceptance of biotechnology may negatively affect demand in the EU for Moroccan agricultural exports, especially fruits and vegetables.

**c) Marketing Studies:** Not applicable.

## CHAPTER 2: ANIMAL BIOTECHNOLOGY

### PART D: PRODUCTION AND TRADE

a) **Product Development:** To safeguard its citrus crop, Morocco has researched using Oxitec's a [GE self-limiting medfly](#); however, open field trials have not been approved. Netted trials in collaboration with SAOAS took place in 2016. The developer claims that the results showed Oxitec's Medfly successfully suppressed the wild population and suggests the self-limiting Medfly could be used in combination with other methods as part of an integrated pest management approach.

b) **Commercial Production:** None.

c) **Exports:** See *Plant Biotechnology*. Additionally, ONSSA notes on its website that “[[surveillance](#)] plans are implemented with the objective of preserving the health of consumers and enabling our products to access the markets of the European Union in accordance with the provisions of directive [96/23/CE](#)”

d) **Imports:** Not applicable.

e) **Trade Barriers:** See *Plant Biotechnology*.

### PART E: POLICY

a) **Regulatory Framework:** See *Plant Biotechnology*.

b) **Innovative Biotechnologies:** None.

c) **Labeling and traceability:** See *Plant Biotechnology*. There is no relevant regulations for animal biotech IPR.

d) **Intellectual Property Rights (IPR):** See *Plant Biotechnology*.

e) **International Treaties and Forums:** Morocco is a member of the WTO, the World Animal Health Organization (OIE), and Codex Alimentarius.

f) **Related Issues:** None

### PART F: MARKETING

a) **Public/Private Opinions:** See *Plant Biotechnology*.

b) **Market Acceptance:** See *Plant Biotechnology*.