

USDA Foreign Agricultural Service

GAIN Report

Global Agricultural Information Network

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Hong Kong

Post: Hong Kong

Biotech Outreach Program in Hong Kong

Report Categories:

Biotechnology - GE Plants and Animals

Export Accomplishments - Events

Approved By:

M. Melinda Meador

Prepared By:

Caroline Yuen

Report Highlights:

To address potential import policies that could inhibit U.S. exports, ATO Hong Kong conducted a two-day outreach program with interested stakeholders on the regulation and utilization of genetically engineered products in the U.S. food chain.

Background:

Currently, Hong Kong does not require a label for genetically engineered (GE) food products but encourages the use of voluntary labeling for these products. However, the issue continues to be a consistent topic for consumer advocacy groups and several Legislative Council members who call for mandatory labeling for GE food products based on a consumer's right to know and doubts about the safety of GE foods.

Biotech Outreach Program 2015:

To address these concerns and forestall any legislative moves toward mandatory labeling, ATO Hong Kong hosted a U.S. expert August 24-25 to educate Hong Kong government officials, educators, stakeholders and media on the science-based principles and consumer benefits of genetic engineering in food production. Dr. Alison Van Eenennaam, Cooperative Extension Specialist, Department of Animal Science, University of California, Davis, and the 2014 Borlaug CAST (Council for Agriculture Science and Technology) Communication Award winner, conducted a series of outreach activities with key decision makers and influencers in Hong Kong.

During an extended meeting with Hong Kong government officials, Dr. Van Eenennaam covered the regulation of the biotech approval process in the U.S. and the reasons why the U.S. does not distinguish between genetic engineered and conventional production processes in labeling of food products. Dr. Van Eenennaam repeated these messages in a two hour seminar we hosted for traders, importers, food manufacturers, consultants and academia as well as an evening program with members of the Hong Kong Dieticians and the Hong Kong Nutritionist Associations where she also emphasized how cost prohibitive and impracticable mandatory labeling is in the global food chain. Dr. Van Eenennaam also took advantage of a radio talk show and magazine interview platforms to educate Hong Kong and Macau audiences on the merits and scientific development of genetically engineered foods. During a private dinner at the Consul General's residence, Dr. Van Eenennaam had the chance to speak candidly and exchange views with Hong Kong and Macau government officials and government's expert committee members who advise on Hong Kong's food regulatory directives.

At each venue, participants were provided with the following GE materials: [How the Federal Government Regulates Biotech Plants](#), [the Top Ten Facts and Executive Summary of GE crops by International Service for the Acquisition of Agri-biotech applications](#) (ISAAA) and [the 2014 CAST Paper #54: The Potential Impacts of Mandatory Labeling for Genetically Engineered Food in the United States](#).

We believe these events were influential in providing the information necessary to promote the safety of GE foods and avoid mandatory labeling of GE foods in Hong Kong and Macau.



Dr. Van Eenennaam speaking at the Trade Seminar



Dr. Van Eenennaam at the HK Dietician and Nutritionist Seminar