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Report Highlights:

There have been no significant changes to Russia's biotech policy this year. Russia still does not allow the use genetically modified seeds for cultivation. However, the registration of biotech events for imported commodities for food and feed continues, although with high costs and time consuming examinations. Anti-GMO campaigns targeting consumers have not been as intensive as they were a year ago, but this phenomenon is better explained by constraints from the current economic crisis rather than by changes in government policy. It is not likely that Russia's biotech policy will change significantly in the coming year, but given the country's growing desire for increased food security and the development of the domestic livestock industry, Russia may progress towards a greater acceptance of agriculture biotechnology in the next two to three years.

Section I. Executive Summary:

Russia's agricultural biotech policy has changed very little this year. Russia continues to prohibit planting of biotech crops. Moreover, there is no governmental structure in place for the approvals of biotechnology for cultivation and release into the environment. Registration of biotech crops (events) for food use and for feeds has continued. These registrations require expensive and time

consuming examinations. High registration costs, the global financial downturn, and unfavorable biotech policies have led to decreasing revenues of biotech companies. In fact, there have been no events scheduled by biotech companies for registration in Russia this year. Imported food and feeds, which contain registered biotech events, shall be registered separately at Rospotrebnadzor (food) and at VPSS (feeds). Registration of food and feeds continues, but it is not very easy to find this information on government or commercial websites.

Anti-GMO campaigns targeting consumers have not been as intensive as they were a year ago. As of July 2008 there have not been any major political events or elections where candidates have used anti-biotech rhetoric as a platform. Moreover, during an economic crisis consumers generally have an increased consideration on the price of food regardless if it may have biotech originations.

Customs trade data does not distinguish between biotech and natural crops, but Russia's imports of soybeans (crop that is more than 85 percent biotech) have increased. Changes in biotech imports since July 2008 have been influenced by Russia's growing soybean demand.

In 2008 the Russian government declared support for innovations and advanced technologies which enhance Russia's economic development. However, research in agricultural biotechnology is not among Russia's science and research priorities. The Russian Academy of Sciences is targeted to be the premier center for the fundamental biotech research, and pays special attention to the application of this research in medicine. Fundamental research in agricultural biotechnology has been underway at the Russian Academy of Agricultural Sciences, but mostly for the development of pest and disease control, rather than for the development of biotech crops. Besides, the Russian Academy of Agricultural Sciences is greatly influenced by traditional seed breeders, thus the Academy has not been a strong supporter of commercializing biotech crops.

Rhetoric toward biotechnology is improving; however farmers' lobbying for the biotech industry in Russia remains very weak. In 2008 Russian farmers harvested a record high volume of grain crops and experienced difficulty selling the grain at competitive prices. Pesticide use during last year's abundant crop harvest did not increase from that of previous years, thus farmers do not attribute pesticide use to the harvest's success. Many farmers do not feel that greater use of biotech crops would significantly increase revenues, thus the desire and support of farmers to increase biotech use in agriculture has been very weak. Furthermore, considering that Russia is a vast territory with large amounts of agricultural land and water resources, government authorities and farmers have little incentive to advance the use of soil saving technologies using biotech crops. However, it is rumored that some Russian farmers have already planted biotech soybeans that were illegally brought in to the country from Ukraine.

Russian trade in food products occurs primarily with Europe, thus Russia has adopted many EU food and feed standards and policies. Although most Russian consumers consider price to be the main factor in purchasing products, the Russian government seeks to standardize and mirror the restrictive biotech policies of major European countries.

Russia's recent decision to suspend its accession to the WTO may negatively affect the bilateral US-Russia dialogue on developing Russia's agricultural biotech policy. The first meeting to discuss biotech related issues in July 2008 proved to be a success in clarifying Russia's policy on food and feeds registration. Particularly, the process for food and feeds registration has become more

effective and efficient, which enables biotech companies to have a greater impact for the use of agricultural biotechnology in Russia. However, progress in developing legislation for cultivation is long overdue.

Section II. Biotechnology Trade and Production:

Illegality of Biotech Crops Production

It is illegal in Russia to produce any biotech crops. Currently, Russia's Federal Law on Environmental Protection does not allow the use of biotech crops in Russia without the approval from the state ecological expert and the executive branch of government. There have been no changes this past year in the law and none are expected in the immediate future. Therefore, biotech crops may only be imported to Russia on the condition that they are not used for planting. In 2008 there was strong lobbying by some Russian agencies and provincial administrations to declare all of Russia or various provinces as "GMO-free", but since 2009 this campaign has faded. Currently, only Belgorod oblast does not allow imports of biotech crops, although this is in violation of Russia's national law, which does not prohibit imports of legally registered biotech crops for feed and food.

Status of Product Approval for Imports and Food and Feed Use

As of July 2009, there are 15 (16) registered biotech crops that can be legally imported to Russia for the food and feed use^[i]. These include three soybean varieties, nine corn varieties, one rice variety, one sugar beet variety, and two potato varieties. Of these 15 varieties, 11 are registered for feed use, including all three soybean varieties and eight corn varieties. Only three companies registered their biotech crops in Russia: Monsanto, Bayer Crop Science, and Syngenta. Table 1 shows the list of approved and registered biotech crops in Russia and the time period for which registration is given. Since 2007 food use registrations have been given for an unlimited time period; however they may be re-called if negative incidents occur. Feeds registrations are given for five years.

From July 2008 to June 2009 there have not been any new registrations for biotech crops, but 7 out of 8 crops received registration or extended registration from the former registration waiting list (see GAIN RS8056 Biotechnology Annual 2008). Presently, only two new crops are awaiting registration: Monsanto's Soybean MON 89788, tolerant to glyphosate, 2nd generation, and Syngenta's Corn 3272 with α -amylase enzyme to break starch during ethanol production (Table 2). These two new biotech crops were submitted for registration in 2007/2008. Monsanto's soybeans passed all tests and examinations and its approval is expected to be complete in 2009, while

Syngenta's corn is still under examination. Biotech Companies refrain to submit new crops for registration for several reasons:

- Russia's inconsistent agricultural biotech policies;
- An unpredictable Russian market for biotech;
- Expensive registration procedures: the price of a bio-safety examination of one new line for food or feed use is approximately 3.5 million rubles (\$110,000), and the price of a bio-safety examination for re-registration is 3.0 million rubles (\$95,000). Registration fees and duties, and cost of custom clearance procedures for imports of sample materials may add another \$10,000 - \$15,000 to the final cost of registration;
- The world economic crisis has caused biotechnology companies to carefully calculate expenses versus revenues. Due to the current financial downturn, biotech companies feel that limited revenues from biotech crops in Russia do not justify paying high examination and registration costs. Thus, biotech companies have decreased investments and registering crops in Russia.

Table 1. Russia: Approved and Registered Biotech Crops, 1999-2009

Crop	Applicant	Year and period of Registration	
		For Food Use	For Feed Use
Bt corn MON 810, resistant to European corn borer	Monsanto	2000 - 2003, 2004 – 2009 Mar. 2009 – for unlimited period	2003 – 2008 Sep. 2008 – Aug. 2013
Roundup Ready® corn NK 603, tolerant to glyphosate	Monsanto	2002 – 2007; 2008 – for unlimited period	2003 – 2008 Sep. 2008 – Aug. 2013
Bt corn MON 863, resistant to corn root worm (<i>Diabrotica</i> spp.)	Monsanto	2003 – 2008 Aug. 2008 – for unlimited period	2003 – 2008 Sept. 2008 – Aug. 2013
Corn Bt 11, tolerant to gluphosinate, insect resistant	Syngenta	2003 – 2008 Sep. 2008 – for unlimited period	Dec. 2006 – Nov. 2011
LL Corn T25, tolerant to gluphosinate	Bayer Crop Sciences	2001 – 2006, 2007 – for unlimited period	Dec. 2006 – Nov. 2011
Roundup Ready ® corn GA 21, tolerant to glyphosate*	Monsanto	2000 - 2003, extended for 2004 – 2009	
Roundup Ready ® corn GA 21, tolerant to glyphosate*	Syngenta	2007 - for unlimited period	2007 – 2012
Corn MIR 604, resistant to corn root worm (<i>Diabrotica</i> spp.)	Syngenta	2007 – for unlimited period	2008 – 2013
Corn MON 88017, stacked product: tolerant to glyphosate	Monsanto	May 2007 – for unlimited period	Sep. 2008 – Aug. 2013

and resistant to corn root worm (Diabrotica spp.)			
Roundup Ready® soybeans 40-3-2, tolerant to glyphosate	Monsanto	1999 – 2002, 2002 – 2007, Dec. 2007 - for unlimited period	2003 – 2008, 2008 – 2013
Liberty Link® Soybeans A2704-12, tolerant to gluphosinate	Bayer Crop Sciences	2002 – 2007 2008 – for unlimited period	2007 – 2012
Liberty Link® Soybeans A5547-127, tolerant to gluphosinate	Bayer Crop Sciences	2002 – 2007 2008 – for unlimited period	2007 – 2012
Rice LL62, tolerant to gluphosinate	Bayer Crop Sciences	2003 – 2008 Dec. 2009 – for unlimited period	
Roundup Ready ® Sugar beet H7-1, tolerant to glyphosate	Monsanto	2006 – for unlimited period	
Bt potato “Elizaveta” (resistant to Colorado potato beetle)	Center “Bio-engineering”, Russia	2005 – for unlimited period**	
Bt potato “Lugovskoy” (resistant to Colorado potato beetle)	Center “Bio-engineering”, Russia	Jul. 2006 – for unlimited period	

* Monsanto sold RR corn GA 21 to Syngenta, thus Syngenta obtained registration for this crop for importation and food use in 2007. Monsanto’s registration of this corn for food use in Russia is valid until 2009.

** In 2006 registration was changed from “up to five years” to an unlimited period.

Table 2. Russia: Biotech Crops Awaiting Approval

Crop	Applicant	Date of Submission for Approval	
		For Food Use	For Feed Use
Corn 3272 with α -amylase enzyme to break starch during ethanol production	Syngenta	Submitted for registration in 2007; still under review	Submitted for registration, but still under review
Soybean MON 89788, tolerant to glyphosate, 2 nd generation	Monsanto	Submitted for registration in July 2008	Submitted for registration in July 2008

On the basis of registered crops Russian authorities issue registrations for food and feeds containing these crops. Each biotech food product or ingredient is registered separately. Each feed is also registered separately. The feeds registrations are issued to the name of a specific company for importing certain feed or feed ingredients.

In addition to expensive and time consuming examinations, other factors impede agriculture biotech

registrations. Anti-biotech rhetoric in 2007-2008 has created an unfavorable environment for most biotech products in Russia. In 2008-2009 Russian SPS policy concerning imports of biotech products improved: VPSS clarified that the phytosanitary ban does not affect imports of corn unless corn is used for planting; feeds registration procedures became more efficient; VPSS clarified that a 5 percent threshold of adventitious biotech presence applies to each separate registered biotech ingredient in imported feeds, rather than to the sum of all found biotech ingredients. However, other unrelated restrictions on biotech imports are still in force. Thus, VPSS restricts the importation of highly processed soybean products, such as protein concentrates and textured proteins, requiring phytosanitary certificates on these products, although many countries do not issue phyto certificates on highly processed products.

Trade

Russia does import some biotech food and feed, but does not record specific trade data on these imports. The development of livestock production in Russia has increased, thus Russia's imports of corn, soybeans and soybean meal increased until the summer of 2008^[ii] when Russia produced a record high volume of grain (including corn) and oilseed crops. Moreover, domestic processing of grain and oilseeds has improved. Thus, since July 2008 total imports of corn and corn products have decreased. Imports of soybeans grew due to an increased soybean processing capacity in Russia, while the imports of soybean products decreased^[iii]. However, this trade data does not reflect a pro- or anti- biotech attitude, but rather a domestic demand in corn and soybeans.

Corn imports

Corn imports dropped from 209,363 metric tons (MT) in October^[iv] 2007 – June 2008 to 45,420 MT in October 2008 - June 2009. Ukraine supplied 22,000 MT, or 49 percent of Russia's total corn imports. Canada exported to Russia 11,047 MT of corn, Hungary – 4,496 MT, United States – 2,232 MT, France, Serbia and Argentina - 1,579 MT, 1,450 MT, and 1,270 MT of corn respectively.

Soybean imports

Russia imported 655,820 MT of soybeans from September^[v] 2008 through June 2009, compared with 362,978 MT in the same period of the preceding year. These included 304,784 MT from Paraguay, 299,601 MT from Brazil, 25,909 MT from the United States, 16,577 MT from Canada, 7,638 MT from Ukraine, 1,207 MT from Moldova, and very small quantities from the other 6 countries. Importers, including those from Brazil, claim that they import mostly non-biotech soybeans. This is highly unlikely since over 80 percent of soybeans on the world market are

biotech.

Soybean flour and meal

Russia's imports of soybean flour (HS No. 1208 10) increased from 3,967 MT in September 2007 – June 2008^[vi] to 4,633 MT during the same period of the following year. China exported 1,826 MT (1,227 MT more than that of the previous year), Exports from Serbia increased from 332 MT to 1,617 MT, exports from Belgium rose from 371 MT to 597 MT, and Russia again accepted imports from the Netherlands, at a volume of 104 MT of soybeans, while exports from Kazakhstan dropped from 2,271 MT to 490 MT.

From September 2008 to June 2009 Russia imported 406,096 MT of soybean meal (HS No. 2304), compared with 662,559 MT in the same period of the preceding year. Eleven different countries exported soybean meal to Russia. Argentina was the leading provider, supplying 196,748 MT (372,462 MT in the previous year), Brazil shipped 56,168 MT (181,872 MT in the previous year). From September 2008 through June 2009, Russia imported 84,067 MT from the Netherlands, up from 42,413 MT in the same period of the preceding year, making the Netherlands the second largest supplier of soybean meal to Russia. Dutch soybean meal usually contains U.S. soybeans that have been processed in the Netherlands or other EU countries. The United States exported 19,707 MT of soybean meal to Russia, down from 35,800 MT in September 2007 through June 2008. Germany shipped 32,119 MT (14,076 MT in the previous period), Norway exported 10,365 MT (only 785 MT in the previous period), and Belgium exported 3,699 MT (down from 5,487 MT in the previous period). Although importers claim that they prefer non-biotech soybean meal, the restored registration of biotech feeds stimulated imports of soybean meal from countries where significant portions of soybeans, if not all beans, are biotech.

^[i] Monsanto sold its RR corn GA 21 to Syngenta, and this crop was registered by Syngenta, while Monsanto's registration for food use has still has been valid through 2009.

^[ii] Russia's grain crop in 2008 was 108.1 MMT

^[iii] Source: World Trade Atlas

^[iv] Marketing year for corn is October through September

^[v] Marketing year for soybeans and soybean products begin in September

^[vi] Soybean flour Import data for April and May are not available.

Section III. New Technologies:

Russian President Medvedev has declared that new technologies shall be the basis for stimulating Russia's economic development. Nano-technologies and biotechnologies were listed among the top

initiatives. However, agricultural biotechnology centered programs are limited to fundamental research projects. Russia's leader in fundamental research is the Center of Bio-Engineering in the Russian Academy of Sciences, headed by the famous Academician Konstantin G. Skryabin (website: <http://www.biengi.ac.ru/>). Applied research in biotechnology is targeted primarily on medicine and pharmaceuticals. Fundamental research in agricultural biotechnology has been underway at the Institute of Agricultural Biotechnology (web-site: <http://www.iab.ac.ru/>) of the Russian Academy of Agricultural Sciences, but mostly for the development of pest and disease control rather than for the development of biotech crops. Since the Russian Academy of Agricultural sciences began the nano-/biotech promotion campaign, the academy has allocated a significant portion of research funds to the laboratory of an influential academician, Lev K. Ernst, who has been a famous leader in the cloning and genetic transformation of animals. However, there have been no official reports and no information is available concerning any progress in these endeavors. In general, the Russian Academy of Agricultural Sciences has been influenced by traditional seed breeders, and has not been a strong supporter of commercializing biotech crops. Research on biotech crops and safety for human consumption are conducted in several research institutes, the major one is the Institute of Nutrition of the Russian Academy of Medical Sciences. Fundamental research in biotechnology is also conducted in some laboratories and faculties of Moscow State University, including the biological faculty (web-site is www.bio.msu.ru), and the Institute of Physico-Chemical Biology (web-site: <http://www.belozersky.msu.ru/>). The non-commercial partnership of the Biotechnology Consortium for Medicine and the Agro-Industrial Complex (BioMac) (website: <http://www.biomac.ru>) unites most of institutes and companies in the field of biotechnology. The Consortium has organized the 3-rd annual biotechnology exhibition-fair "RosBioTech-2009 in Moscow, November 10-12, 2009 under the slogan "From Innovative Research to an Innovative Economy".

Section IV. Biotechnology Policy: Russian Biotechnology Legislature

Russian legislation does not contain a comprehensive biotech policy or harmonized code of laws to regulate biotech issues.^[i] Below is a summary of laws that regulate biotech policy. These include laws on product registration and consumer information about biotech ingredients in food products.

- Federal Law No. 86-FZ of July 5, 1996, *On State Regulation in the Sphere of Genetic Engineering Activities* with amendments
- Federal Law No. 29-FZ of January 2, 2000, *On the Quality and Safety of Food Products* with amendments
- Federal Law No. 2300-1 of February 7, 1992, *On the Protection of Consumers Rights* with amendments. The amendment of October 25, 2007 sets the threshold for mandatory labeling of food ingredients made from biotech material to 0.9 percent. Prior to this amendment, trace amounts of biotech food ingredients required labeling
- Resolution of the Government of the Russian Federation No. 422 of July 14, 200 that transferred testing and registration of biotech feeds from the Ministry of Agriculture of the Russian Federation to the Federal Service for Veterinary and Phytosanitary Surveillance (VPSS)
- Resolution of the Government of the Russian Federation No. 120 of February 16, 2001, *On State Registration of Genetically Modified Organisms and Registration Regulation*

- Resolution of the Government of the Russian Federation No. 988 of December 21, 2000, *On State Registration of New Food Products, Materials, and Goods* with amendments
- Article 50.1 Environmental Protection from Negative Biological Impact of Federal Law No. 7-FZ of January 10, 2002, *On Environmental Protection*. This article prohibits approving biotech plants for cultivation
- Federal Law of the Russian Federation No. 65-FZ of May 1, 2007, *On Amendments to the Federal Law “On Technical Regulation,”* made several amendments which actually suspended adoption of two biotech-related technical regulations (*On Requirements for Biosafety and the Safety of Biotech Plants*, and *On Requirements for Safety of Foodstuffs Produced from Raw Materials Derived from Biotech Plants and Animals*) for an indefinite period of time. In accordance with this Federal Law “Until the day when the respective technical regulation comes into force, the Government of the Russian Federation and the federal bodies of executive power ... within their responsibilities have the right to introduce ... changes to the regulatory acts of the Russian Federation, which will be used until the respective technical regulation comes into force”. This amendment gives the federal authorities - including Ministries, Services, and Agencies – the right to declare and amend norms and standards. Thus, the Orders of the Chief Medical Officer, the Head of Rospotrebnadzor, became mandatory after being registered at the Ministry of Justice of the Russian Federation. Rospotrebnadzor’s unregistered instructions regulate only the activities of employees within that agency. However, these instructions also influence producers and traders, because Rospotrebnadzor inspectors follow these instructions when surveying production sites, shops, warehouses, and other facilities
- Resolution No. 42 of June 25, 2007^[iii] approved SanPiN 2.3.2.2227-07, Additions and Changes No. 5 to the Sanitary-Epidemiological Rules (SanPiN 2.3.2.1078-01 of 2002, Hygiene Requirements to Safety and Nutrition Value of Food Products). SanPiN 2.3.2.2227-07 establishes a threshold level for biotech ingredients in food products, requiring labeling for those with components over 0.9 percent biotech. The resolution acknowledges that any smaller biotech presence is adventitious. These shall not be considered biotech products, and they shall not require special consumer information. The Ministry of Justice of the Russian Federation registered Resolution No. 42 on July 16, 2007 under Registration No. 9852. The resolution thus established an accepted federal level, and SanPiN 2.3.2.2227-07 came into force on September 1, 2007^[iii].

Thus, in accordance with current legislation all organizations that import, produce, or trade food products must inform consumers about the presence of biotech components in food products, provided the share of biotech in these components is more than 0.9 percent. Order No. 80 specifies the methods that should be used to test for biotech presence in food.

For imported food products Rospotrebnadzor has the right to conduct sample tests to detect the presence of biotech components. In order to substantiate the biotech-free claim the producer or exporter may conduct its own tests at independent laboratories (it may be an IP system of a PCR test), but the results of these tests are not accepted by the Russian Rospotrebnadzor. These pre-export tests are voluntary for producers and exporters. If a producer/exporter claims that its products are not genetically altered, Rospotrebnadzor still has the right to examine these products. Furthermore, if the presence of genetic alteration in the products is more than 0.9 percent the import permit is recalled, and a claim for fraud may be placed on that company. Usually Rospotrebnadzor

pays special attention to products containing soybean or corn ingredients. Thus, any previous labeling or certification of the products as GMO-free is not necessary.

The maximum adventitious presence of non-registered biotech components in feeds allowed is 0.5 percent. Feed may be classified as biotech-free if presence of each non-registered biotech line in feeds does not exceed 0.5 percent, and if presence of each registered biotech line in the feed does not exceed 0.9 percent. In this case, “registered” refers to products registered in Russia and “non-registered” refers to products not registered in Russia. The presence of genetic alterations in feed components is calculated separately and not comprehensively. For example, if two registered components in feeds contain 0.6 percent of genetic alterations in each, then the feed is considered to be non biotech, although together the sum is 1.2 percent. The pre-export identification of feed as non-GMO is not required. It is up to the producer/exporter to declare the feed as non-GMO, but the VPSS regardless examines the products for the presence of biotech components.

Government Ministries and Their Roles

Registration for Food Use

The Russian Federal Service for Consumer Rights Protection and Human Well-Being (Rospotrebnadzor) at the Ministry of Health and Social development registers biotech crops and ingredients for food use. The registration process is as follows:

1. The applicant submits the application and dossier to Rospotrebnadzor;
2. Rospotrebnadzor assigns a safety assessment to the Institute of Nutrition of the Academy of Medical Sciences;
3. The applicant concludes an agreement for the food safety assessment with this Institute; and
4. On the basis of the Institute’s assessment, Rospotrebnadzor issues a certificate of registration and registers the product.

To conduct safety assessments, the Institute of Nutrition subcontracts with other research institutes for medical, genetic, and technological tests.

It takes 12 months to conduct laboratory tests and an additional two to three months to organize and prepare documents for the new biotech crops. To alleviate consumer concerns, the Ministry of Health and Social Development decided to conduct medical and biological tests for major biotech crops over several generations. These tests are for scientific purposes however, and will not affect registration procedures or increase the testing period.

Registering food products and ingredients requires less time, however, registration is only granted if the biotech product comes from those biotech crops that have already been registered and approved. It is necessary to provide a copy of the crop registration certificate in the application documents when registering food products or ingredients. Only those companies which registered their crops in Russia for food use (one of three companies mentioned above) can provide a copy of the crop registration certificate.

Since 2006 Rospotrebnadzor has registered food-use crops for an unlimited time period. Information on biotech crops registered for food use for food products or ingredients containing registered biotech ingredients is available on Rospotrebnadzor’s website: <http://fp.crc.ru/gosregfr/>. The list of

registered products contains all new food products, not only biotech products or products with biotech ingredients. There are several hundred different products and names. To find permitted food products for a specific crop, search for the name of the crop and the words “genetically modified.”

Registration for Feed Use

Plant-origin feed imports require a veterinary certificate and a letter stating that the feed is biotech free (the maximum adventitious presence may be 5 percent). If the feed contains biotech ingredients, the shipment must include a copy of the certificate indicating that the biotech components in the feed are registered with the Federal Service for Veterinary and Phytosanitary Surveillance (VPSS) at the Russian Ministry of Agriculture. The imports must also have a phytosanitary quarantine certificate, although it is unrelated to biotechnology. Any biotech components in feed must be appropriately registered.

The registration process is as follows:

1. The applicant submits the application and dossier to VPSS;
2. VPSS assigns a safety assessment to its Research Institute of Veterinary Control (All-Russian Center of Quality and Standardization of Veterinary Pharmaceuticals and Feeds);
3. The applicant concludes an agreement for a food safety assessment with this Institute; and
4. On the basis of the Institute’s assessment, VPSS issues a certificate of registration and registers the product.

To register formula feeds rather than crops, VPSS issues feed-registration certificates to a specific applicant for an individual shipment during a certain period of time. The VPSS only issues certificates for feeds produced using registered biotech crops. The certificates cannot be transferred to different importers. This registration is conducted by VPSS, but the list of registered feeds is not available on the site. Given that the registration is given for a certain shipment, information on this registration is actually accessible to the importer only.

Role of the Biosafety Commission

The Biosafety Commission in Russia ceased to exist after the government reorganized in 2003, and no other entity has been granted the authority to issue bio-safety approvals. In 2007 the Russian government created a sort of equivalent to this Commission, but with very limited authorities – the Interagency Commission on Genetic Engineering. However, during the May 2008 government reorganization the work of this commission was also terminated. No information exists on the re-establishment of the Biosafety Commission for a future time period.

Policy on the Coexistence of Biotech and Non-Biotech Crops

There are no commercial biotech crops. For scientific purposes only, research institutes conduct limited field trials in isolated and strictly controlled areas. Researchers are studying coexistence at the laboratory level.

Food Labeling

In accordance with the amendments to the federal law *On Protection of Consumer Rights* in the Civil Code of the Russian Federation made in October 2007, the threshold for mandatory labeling of food ingredients made from biotech material is 0.9 percent. Prior to the amendment, trace amounts of biotech food ingredients required labeling. Article 10, item 2 of the FL *On Protection of Consumer Rights* now reads: "... Foodstuffs shall contain information about their composition, including the names of food additives used in the process of making foodstuffs, biologically active additives, information on the presence in foodstuffs of components produced with the use of organisms modified by genetic engineering in cases when the presence of these organisms in the component is more than nine-tenths of a percent, food value, purpose, conditions of use, storage of foodstuffs, ways of cooking ready-made dishes, weight (volume), date and place of manufacture, packing (parceling) of foodstuffs, and data on contraindications for their consumption in the case of certain diseases...". The Russian Chief Medical Officer accordingly amended the Russian Sanitary-Epidemiological Rules SanPiN 2.3.2.1078-01 *Hygiene Requirements to Safety and Nutrition Value of Food Products* by establishing a 0.9 percent threshold for biotech components in food products for labeling.

Companies are not required to inform consumers on the presence of trace amounts of biotech ingredients, and even may label these products as biotech free. Biotech-free labeling is not required by law. However, some local authorities invent and advertise special labels for products that do not have biotech components. Thus, the Moscow city government has promoted a voluntary "Does not contain GMO" labeling. These labels can be found on some food products in Moscow shops.

In 2008 Russia developed and adopted a new SanPiN for organic products^[iv] thus, some products may have "organic" rather than "GMO-free" labeling, as it is required that organic products shall not contain biotech ingredients. However, most Russian consumers are price conscious and pay little attention to biotech or organic labels. The current economic crisis has increased price sensitivity, and consumers' anxiety over biotech labels has faded away. In addition, despite the risk of incurring penalties from Rospotrebnadzor inspectors, most small and medium size food producers simply ignore the labeling requirement.

Feed Labeling

There are no formal requirements for labeling feeds. However, VPSS issued instructions for the adventitious presence of registered and non-registered biotech components in feeds. The instruction defines feed as biotech-free if 0.5 percent or less of each component contains non-registered biotech products and if 0.9 percent or less of each component contains registered^[v] biotech products.

^[i] For more information on the list of basic laws and federal regulations that concern agricultural biotechnology and the use of biotech products in foods and feeds see GAIN RS8056 *Biotechnology / Annual Report 2008*.

^[ii] Russia's Chief Medical Officer (Chief Sanitary Inspector of the Russian Federation) issued Resolution No. 42 as the Head of Rospotrebnadzor.

^[iii] For more information see GAIN RS7053 *Biotechnology / Russia Establishes 0.9% Threshold for Biotech Labeling*
^[iv] RS8045 *Organic Products / New SanPiN for Organic Products*

^[v] "Registered" refers to biotech products registered by VPSS for use in the Russian Federation and "non-registered" refers to products not registered by VPSS for use in the Russian Federation.

Section V. Marketing:

Labeling requirements increases the price of food containing biotech ingredients. The price of examining products for the presence (or absence) of biotech components is high, because the approved methods of testing are extensive. Specialists claim that the recent activities of the State Standards Committee and the GOST on identification of GMO with microchips ^[i] may result in a significant increase of fees for imports of all food and agricultural products to Russia.

^[i] On December 29, 2003 the State Committee of the Russian Federation on standardization and metrology introduced two GOSTs (state Standards) GOST P 52173-2003 “Raw materials and food products. Method of identification of genetically modified sources (GMI) of plant origin” and GOST P 52174-2003 “Biological safety. Method of identification of genetically modified sources of plant origin using biological microchip”.

Section VI. Capacity Building and Outreach:

During the economic crisis funding for anti-biotech groups, such as Greenpeace and other NGOs, decreased and consequently, the anti-biotech campaign has faded. However, pro-biotech groups have not received new funds in spite of a declared support of innovations and advanced technologies by the Russian Government. Mass media is still mostly anti-biotech, but the issue is not very important and is discussed very little by mass media.

Section VII. Comments:

It is not expected that any significant improvements in Russian policy for biotechnology will occur in the coming year. However, Russia still has great potential in developing agricultural biotechnology. In light of the current financial downturn, Russian policy may become more favorable towards biotechnology as it seeks more cost effective methods to produce agricultural products and to import necessary agricultural (i.e. soybeans) products and ingredients for Russia’s food industry from greater biotechnologically advanced countries.

Reasons and arguments for developing Russia’s agricultural biotechnology and relevant national policies in the future include the following:

- In 2007-2008 Russia became a major grain exporter, and has begun to develop its feed industry to meet a growing domestic demand in feeds. Russian livestock producers and grain traders are very interested in a reliable, weather independent, supply of grain and protein feeds. Their interest is based on an understanding that a reliable supply of grain and protein crops requires the use of biotech crops, including drought-resistant crops, crops with multiple biotech traces, and crops with special quality characteristics. Hopefully the influence of these groups will increase. The Russian Grain Union is one of the strongest lobbyist for advanced agricultural biotechnology;
- Russia has many formerly used agricultural lands which need significant investments to be recultivated. There are significant cost savings for recultivating these lands when considering the use are of advanced technologies, such as biotechnology;
- The Economic crisis will cause Russian farmers to consider cost effective

measures more closely, including minimum and no-till practices which implies planting biotech seeds;

- Russia's agriculture has very much in common with other members of the BRIC countries, thus Brazil's or China's use of biotechnology for developing reliable agriculture may influence Russian policy makers;

- Since, biotech crops (soybeans) have already illegally penetrated Russia's borders from Ukraine and possibly from Kazakhstan into the Far East, Russian authorities may be inclined to legalize that what has already occurred, by admitting biotech farming in Russia;

- The development of biotechnology science and the creation of crops with new qualities in other countries might be a major challenge among Russian policy makers to support domestic agricultural biotechnology;

- If the economic crisis worsens in Russia in the near future, imports of cheap food, grains, and oilseeds for feeding may increase. Thus authorities may be inclined to soften policy towards imports of biotech products and their standardization requirements.