

USDA Foreign Agricultural Service

GAIN Report

Global Agricultural Information Network

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Jamaica

Agricultural Biotechnology Annual

Jamaica's Biotechnology Report 2016

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Report Highlights:

There is no commercial production of genetically engineered (GE) crops in Jamaica. At present, Jamaica's biotechnology and bio-safety environment does not accommodate the deregulation and commercialization of products of modern biotechnology. Jamaica ratified the Cartagena Protocol on Bio-safety (CPB) on September 25, 2012 which came into force on December 24, 2012.

Post: Kingston

Section I. Executive Summary:

Jamaica is an important market for U.S. bulk agricultural products (corn, rice and wheat), intermediate products (soybean meal), and high value products (refined soybean oils, snack foods, etc.), with a total value of approximately USD 300 million. In the future, imports of U.S. food and agricultural products will be influenced increasingly by the nature of Jamaica's biotechnology and bio-safety policies. Jamaica ratified the Cartagena Protocol on Bio-safety (CPB) on September 25, 2012 which came into force on December 24, 2012. The present regulatory framework governing the importation, development and use of the products of modern biotechnology is in the draft stage. Regulations for the importation of genetically engineered (GE) organisms for laboratory purposes are well established. However, Jamaica prohibits the commercial introduction of living modified organisms (LMO) for planting.

Section II: Plant and Animal Biotechnology

CHAPTER 1: PLANT BIOTECHNOLOGY

PART A: Production and Trade

a) Product development:

N/A

b) Commercial production:

There is no commercial production of GE crops in Jamaica. The Biotechnology Center at the University of the West Indies (UWI) continues to work on developing a transgenic variety of papaya (Carica papaya L) that is resistant to the Papaya Ringspot Virus. Laboratory work is also being conducted to develop virus-resistant transgenic hot pepper and tomato cultivars. Jamaica's National Biotechnology Strategy extensively incorporates the potential to apply the tools of modern biotechnology to specific crops that are of economic importance to Jamaica, including hot pepper (Capsicum chinense), pumpkin (Cucubita pepo L.) and citrus (Citrus sinensis).

c) Exports:

N/A

d) Imports:

Post is not aware of any specific requirements on GE product imports into Jamaica. The supply of most bulk commodities including corn, wheat, and soybean products are imported and come mainly from the United States and Brazil, where GE crops are grown.

e) Food aid:

N/A

f) Trade barriers:

None

PART B: Policy

a) Regulatory framework:

Although there is legislation related to GE and GE products, these Acts lack specificity and therefore, there is a need for new comprehensive legislation. Jamaica's present biotechnology and bio-safety legal framework does not establish procedures or conditions for the deregulation and commercialization of products of modern biotechnology. There is no regulation governing the importation of Living Modified Organisms (LMO) for animal feed or processing (such as grain corn and soybean), or high value products that are derived from genetically engineered (GE) crops (such as cooking oil). However, there are regulations governing the importation of LMOs for experimental purposes. The importation of LMOs for intentional commercial release into the natural environment is prohibited. Jamaica's draft Biosafety Policy Act has not been approved by the Parliament. The regulations sent to the political directorate are still in the draft submission stage. The biotechnology policy is also still in draft, pending action by the Jamaican Cabinet. It is not clear when or if further action will be forthcoming; however, Jamaica did ratify the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety (CPB) on September 25, 2012.

In 2007, the Jamaican Parliament passed the National Commission on Science and Technology (NCST) Act. The Act states that "the Commission shall promote the sustainable development and utilization of local science and technology capacities, for competitive and profitable production through education of the populace, partnership with government, private sector, academic institutions and such other bodies or institutions as the Commission considers appropriate". The NCST will be a multi-sectoral commission and the National Focal Point to coordinate domestic activities and liaise with the Biosafety Clearing House and other external organizations.

Jamaica received assistance in the preparation of its National Biosafety Framework from the United Nations Environmental Programme/Global Environmental Facility (UNEP/GEF) – Global Project "Development of National Biosafety Frameworks". The project started in November 2002 and was completed in December 2007. A National Biosafety Policy was developed through the Project and is currently in its third draft, which will direct national biotechnology and biosafety regulations. It should be noted that the draft National Bio-Safety Policy explicitly states the need for mandatory labeling of products of modern biotechnology.

b) Approvals:

There are no lists of approved/registered plants/crops for import/export or for domestic cultivation.

c) Stacked or Pyramided Event Approvals:

The government of Jamaica does not require additional approval for stacked/pyramided events.

d) Field Testing:

Jamaica allows field-testing of GE crops. This research is monitored by a National Biosafety Committee set up for this purpose. The Plants (Importation) Control Regulations (1997) under the Plants Quarantine Act, 1994 is the only legal instrument that directly addresses the issues of biosafety. This was enacted in 1997 and amended in 2005. Under these regulations the National Biosafety Committee is legislated to monitor the importation of any plant, seed, cutting or slip, which has been genetically modified and imported into Jamaica for the purpose of experimentation.

e) Innovative Biotechnologies:

N/A

f) Coexistence:

N/A

g) Labeling:

Jamaica does not have a labeling requirement for GE products/ingredients.

h) Monitoring and Testing:

No monitoring and testing for GE traits in imports.

i) Low Level Presence (LLP) Policy:

Jamaica has no LLP policy.

j) Additional Regulatory Requirements:

None

k) Intellectual Property Rights (IPR):

N/A

l) Cartagena Protocol Ratification:

Jamaica ratified the Cartagena Protocol on Bio-safety (CPB) to the United Nation's Convention on Biological Diversity on September 25, 2012, which came into force on December 24, 2012.

m) International Treaties/Fora:

Jamaican officials from the ministries of Agriculture, Commerce and Health participate in international standard setting bodies such as the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) and Codex Alimentarius (Codex).

n) Related Issues:

N/A

PART C: Marketing

a) Public/Private Opinions:

No active organizations or campaigns that are lobbying either for or against the use of GE plants.

b) Market Acceptance/Studies:

There are no significant GE marketing issues that currently affect U.S. agricultural products.

CHAPTER 2: ANIMAL BIOTECHNOLOGY

There are no GE animals for food production in Jamaica and the country is not conducting research on GE animals.

PART D: Production and Trade

a) Product Development: N/A

b) Commercial Production: N/A

c) Exports: N/A

d) Imports: N/A

e) Trade Barriers: N/A

PART E: Policy

a) Regulatory Framework: N/A

b) Innovative Biotechnologies: N/A

c) Labeling and Traceability: N/A

d) Intellectual Property Rights (IPR): N/A

e) International Treaties/Flora: N/A

f) Related Issues: N/A

PART F: Marketing

a) Public/Private Opinions: None. Not an issue of public debate or concerns.

b) Market Acceptance/Studies: None