

USDA Foreign Agricultural Service

GAIN Report

Global Agricultural Information Network

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Dominican Republic Agricultural Biotechnology Annual 2015

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Report Highlights:

The Dominican Republic continues to be a strong market for U.S. bulk agricultural products (wheat, corn), intermediate goods (soybean meal), as well as high value consumer-oriented products (processed food products), reaching a total value of almost US\$1.3 billion in 2014. Despite legislation limiting importation of genetically modified raw materials, the regulatory framework to implement that legislation never been finalized.

Section I. Executive Summary:

The Dominican Republic represents an important destination for U.S. feed grains, oilseeds and processed food products. Although the DR has signed the Cartagena Protocol, and some past legislation would limit the import of Genetically Modified Organisms (GMO's), the GoDR has never actively sought to restrict imports, and has given no indication that it intends to do so.

Currently, the DR does not produce any Genetically Engineered (GE) crops, nor are there any under development at this time. In recent years, however, more than a dozen crops have been reproduced in the DR via low-tech tissue culture, thereby contributing significantly to specific areas of Dominican agricultural production.

Section II. Plant biotechnology

2.1. Production and trade

Biotech production:

There is no biotech production in the Dominican Republic and the country does not plan to pursue it at this time. Last year, mid-size local producers of corn from the northern Dominican Republic publicly requested that the Government approve the use of transgenic products in order to address the competitive challenges posed by large scale corn imports. Those producers have questioned the “inflexible” position of the Ministry of Agriculture of the Dominican Republic (MoA) in prohibiting imports of corn seeds and other genetically modified products. However, the Government has not shifted their position in this matter.

Biotech trade:

The supply of almost all coarse grains and soybean products of the Dominican Republic originate in the United States, Brazil, Argentina and other markets where GE strains are common. Therefore, the poultry, swine and dairy industries rely heavily on genetically modified feed inputs for livestock development and finishing. The food processing industry of the Dominican Republic also continues to rely heavily on U.S. soybean, sunflower and corn oil to meet its needs.

For imports the DR does have a rule in place that requires that the phytosanitary certificate accompanying a corn shipment state that said product “does not contain GMO material”. This requirement was not enforced in the country except for a brief episode in 2015 when MoA stopped two US corn shipments, demanding a certification stating that the product “does not contain GMO material”. After complaints from private industry, the Ministry permitted the entry of the product and committed to removing this requirement from the general corn import requirements.

At this time Post is not aware of any efforts by either Government, private importers or NGO's to actively exclude GE products from these industries.

The following table captures export values for selected U.S. agricultural products into the Dominican market during Calendar Year 2014 (CY 2014):

Export values of selected agricultural products to the Dominican Republic, CY 2014

Product	Export value (in thousands of US\$)
Wheat	149,788
Corn	136,222
Soybean meal	192,358
Soybean oil	123,893
Other vegetable oils	15,514
Coarse grains (ex. corn)	34
TOTAL	617,809

Source: GATS, USDA

Food aid:

The Dominican Republic has not been a regular recipient of food aid. One of the most recent Food for Progress (FFP) donations in the country, however, was carried out for Haiti and Dominican Republic and involved the sale of soybean meal monetized in the DR. In late 2013 a donation of wheat was also monetized in the DR to implement a FFP program in El Salvador. A new donation is expected for the ending of 2015 or beginning of 2016. The exclusion of biotech products has not been an issue in the country's acceptance of these programs, nor are they expected to be a point of contention in the future.

2.2. Policy

Regulatory system:

The Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources (MIMARENA), the Ministry of Agriculture (MA) and the Ministry of Public Health (MSP) work together on development and implementation of the national biotech policy. For example, the MA and specifically the Plant Health Department, is responsible for regulating and assuring the safe entry of plant products into the country. This institution also collaborates and coordinates with the MSP on health-related issues concerning GE materials.

Several other public sector entities comprise a commission that meet periodically to discuss scientific aspects pertaining to biotech policy recommendations. Among these institutions are:

- **The Institute for Research in Agriculture, Livestock and Forestry (IDIAF):** this entity is supported by the GoDR and its main objective is to conduct research in agriculture and forestry in the DR, and also validate those research results;
- **The National Council for Research in Agriculture and Forestry (CONIAF):** this Council is a decentralized entity that seeks to strengthen, stimulate and guide research efforts within the realms of agriculture and forestry. It offers financing through research grants and works closely with both the public and private sectors.
- **The Center for Agricultural and Forestry Development (CEDAF):** this Center is a non-profit organization that promotes sustainable development of the agricultural, livestock and forestry sectors through training, informational courses and workshops, as well as conducting sectorial

analysis for the purpose of defining strategic goals. Its primary focus is to render agriculture more competitive, decrease poverty levels and protect the environment; and,

- ***The Institute for Biotechnology and Industry Innovation (IIBI)***: this entity is backed by the GoDR and promotes technological development in areas such as biotechnology and capacity building, in order to enhance the country's competitiveness in international trade.

In addition to the institutions above, the commission also includes participation from three of the country's leading universities, namely: 1) the Pedro Henriquez Ureña National University (UNPHU); 2) the Institute for Higher Learning in Agriculture (ISA); and, 3) the Autonomous University of Santo Domingo (UASD).

In the case of IIBI, it also manages the Centre of Vegetable Biotechnology (CEBIVE) with the objective to produce plants with quality, pest and disease resistance and endurance from environmental factors. The CEBIVE has established propagation lines of production of several plant varieties such as: bananas, plantains, orchids, etc. The Centre has also characterized several local plant varieties.

Regulation of stacked plant products:

The Government of the Dominican Republic does not require additional approval for stacked events.

Coexistence between biotech and non-biotech crops:

In the Dominican Republic, the coexistence between biotechnology and non-biotechnology crops is not regulated by the government and current rules and regulations do not address this issue.

Despite this, the DR continues to increase organic. The country is party to the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) between the EU and the CARIFORUM countries, and exports large quantities of organic bananas, cocoa and coffee to the European market.

Labeling of GMO products:

The Dominican Republic does not require GE ingredients or content to be labeled on processed products. The current labeling requirements are found in RTD 53 (NORDOM 53), which is formally a technical regulation, but has only been partially enforced since 2008. That regulation follows the Codex Stan 1-1985 and states that labeling should be in the Spanish language.

Biotech related trade barriers:

For import purposes, the Dominican Republic currently has rules in place that require phytosanitary certificates accompanying corn shipments to state that the product "*does not contain GMO material.*" However, this requirement was only briefly enforced, and the country continues to import large volumes of corn of both U.S. and South American origin (usually in excess of 1 million metric tons annually).

The Cartagena Protocol on biosafety:

At the present time, Dominican legislation does not allow the production, marketing or imports of GMO's but, as noted above, these provisions are not enforced. Due to the lack of any regulatory

framework, there are no biotechnology crops currently approved for direct consumption, processing or animal feed.

Since 2006, the Dominican Republic became a signatory to the Cartagena Biosafety Protocol and the MIMARENA's Biosafety and Forestry Directorate, is the entity responsible for coordinating policy at the national level. MIMARENA is also responsible for drafting legislation and technical regulations regulating genetic resources and biosafety. A first draft of the biosecurity and biodiversity law was approved in 2013 by the Senate but was never considered by the Chamber of Deputies (lower house) due to lack of interest. MIMARENA planned to re-submit the proposed law to the Senate during 2014 but was not able to do so. They expect to re-submit it during 2015.

According to MIMARENA, the proposed legislative text would create a regulatory framework that encompasses national policy for biotechnology, a national policy for biosafety, an administrative and regulatory system for importing GE material, a decision-making support system, coupled with a mechanism to facilitate social participation and consultation.

On its face, this draft legislation—aimed at implementing the Cartagena Protocol-- has the potential to adversely affect trade in products comprised of GE materials, given that both the issues of traceability and labeling are contemplated in the proposed text. However, as the draft law perished, the final text of the law is still unknown.

The Dominican Republic is also signee of the Nagoya Protocol, which reinforces the interest of MIMARENA in advancing the proposed legislation.

2.3. Marketing

As stated previously, current Dominican legislation does not allow the production, marketing or import of GMO's, but these provisions have not been enforced strongly.

2.4. Capacity building and outreach

GoDR officials from the Ministries of Environment and Agriculture participate in international standard setting bodies when funding is available. For example, the country is participant in the Central American Initiative on Biotechnology and Biosafety (ICABB) promoted by the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation in Agriculture (IICA) with financial support from USDA. The Initiative is promoting training activities mainly focused in risk analysis.

Section III. Animal biotechnology

There are no GE animals for food production in the DR and the country is not conducting research on them. In addition, animal biotechnology is not contemplated in the biosafety law.

During 2014, the Government opened the Laboratory of Biotechnology and Animal Reproduction with the objective of increasing quality in the production of meat and dairy products. This laboratory has technologies for: in vitro fertilization, semen preservation, storage silos, production of in vitro embryos, collection, preservation and transfer of embryos, and others.

