

USDA Foreign Agricultural Service

# GAIN Report

Global Agricultural Information Network

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## Italy

**Post:** Rome

### **Agricultural News for Italy EU and world December 2010**

**Report Categories:**

Agriculture in the News

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**Report Highlights:**

Report contains Italian, EU and world agricultural news items of interest for the month of December 2010.

## General Information:

### ITALY

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#### **Galan: the Future of Agriculture is through Research**

Italian Minister of Agriculture Galan speaking at a plant genetics conference at the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) stressed the importance for farmers and researchers to work together to preserve and protect biodiversity. “Through sharing of their expertise they can feed the world in the most equitable and sustainable way possible”.

*Italian Ministry of Agriculture website*

#### **385 Tons of Fake San Marzano Tomatoes En Route to the U.S. Seized**

Italian police officials seized 385 tons of fake San Marzano tomatoes worth over \$300,000 that were ready to be exported to the United States. *Italian Ministry of Agriculture website*

#### **Second Italian Dies of Human Mad Cow Disease**



The Italian Ministry of Health reports that a second Italian has died because of Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease (vCJD), the human form of the fatal brain-wasting illness also known as mad cow disease or BSE (bovine spongiform encephalopathy). Italy's first case was reported in 2003. There have been 275 cases of vCJD worldwide over the last decade, including 170 in Britain, the worst-affected country, 56 in Israel, and 25 in France. EU restrictions on people eating beef-off-the-bone and offal were lifted in 2006 as the 'mad cow' crisis was declared officially over. *Italian Ministry of Health website*

### FEATURE STORY



#### **What is Organic?**

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has established an organic certification program that requires all organic foods to meet strict government standards. These standards regulate how such foods are grown, handled and processed. Any farmer or food manufacturer who labels and sells a product as organic must be USDA certified. If a food bears a USDA Organic label, it means it's produced and processed according to the USDA standards. The seal is voluntary, but many organic producers use it. Of note is that Italy does not have an “export arrangement and recognition agreement”

with the U.S. National Organic Program.

***Do 'organic' and 'natural' mean the same thing?***

No, "natural" and "organic" are not interchangeable terms. You may see "natural" and other terms such as "all natural," "free-range" or "hormone-free" on food labels. These descriptions must be truthful, but don't confuse them with the term "organic." Only foods that are grown and processed according to USDA organic standards can be labeled organic.

***Conventional vs. organic farming***

The word "organic" refers to the way farmers grow and process agricultural products, such as fruits, vegetables, grains, dairy products and meat. Organic farming practices are designed to encourage soil and water conservation and reduce pollution. Farmers who grow organic produce and meat don't use conventional methods to fertilize, control weeds or prevent livestock disease.

***Here are other differences between conventional farming and organic farming:***

<b>Conventional</b>	<b>Organic</b>
Apply chemical fertilizers to promote plant growth.	Apply natural fertilizers, such as manure or compost, to feed soil and plants.
Spray insecticides to reduce pests and disease.	Use beneficial insects and birds, mating disruption or traps to reduce pests and disease.
Use chemical herbicides to manage weeds.	Rotate crops, till, hand weed or mulch to manage weeds.
Give animals antibiotics, growth hormones and medications to prevent disease and spur growth.	Give animals organic feed and allow them access to the outdoors. Use preventive measures — such as rotational grazing, a balanced diet and clean housing — to help minimize disease.

***Organic food: Is it more nutritious?***

Probably not, but the answer isn't yet clear. A recent study examined the past 50 years' worth of scientific articles about the nutrient content of organic and conventional foods. Researchers concluded that organically and conventionally produced foodstuffs are comparable in their nutrient content.

***Are there downsides to buying organic?***

One common concern with organic food is cost. Organic foods typically cost more than do their conventional counterparts. Higher prices are due, in part, to more expensive farming practices, tighter government regulations and lower crop yields. Because organic fruits and vegetables aren't treated with waxes or preservatives, they may spoil faster. Also, some organic produce may look less than perfect — odd shapes, varying colors or smaller sizes. However, organic foods must meet the same quality and safety standards as those of conventional foods.

***USDA and Mayo Clinic websites***

### **Citizens Call for a GMO Moratorium**

A petition presented to the European Commission by several NGOs and signed by more than one million people is calling for a freeze of GM approvals. The petition asks for the ban of GM crops until a new independent scientific body is established to assess their impact in place of the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA). Responding to the petition, EU Commissioner Dalli noted that he is "committed to look seriously at the petition," however; the EU Commission has three months time to decide what action to take regarding the petition. Back in July Dalli launched a GM cultivation package which proposed giving member states more flexibility on cultivation in order to break the deadlock over new biotech approvals. *AGRA PRESS*

### **Dalli Calls on Industry to Rally Public Support for GMOs**

EU Commissioner Dalli speaking at the European Association for Bioindustries, Europabio Conference, told delegates that it was up to industry to help consumers understand the "clear and tangible benefits" of GMOs. "Only if innovation is safe and is perceived to be safe will it make its way through the whole production chain (from the farmers, to the food industry, to final consumers and of course the environment.)" Dalli has called for a "vociferous public debate on GMOs" while also publically supporting the European Food Safety Authority's (EFSA) scientific advice on GMOs, which has repeatedly "proven" that the products' are safe both for animal and human health.

*AGRA NEWS*

### **GIs Feature in Anti-Counterfeiting Accord**

The EU and its key trading partners have inked an agreement to enforce intellectual property rights (IPR), an issue of major importance to the EU in WTO talks and bilateral trade deals alike. However, while the agreement establishes an international framework to harmonize the way IPR infringements are combated, the treaty does not impose any changes in the way different types of IP (such as Geographical Indications -GIs) are recognized in each country. Signatories of the Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement (ACTA) included the EU, Australia, Canada, Japan, Korea, Mexico, Morocco, New Zealand, Singapore, Switzerland and the United States. EU officials explained that Brussels never saw ACTA as a vehicle for "pushing" the GI system, but rather as a means of rooting out discrimination between enforcement of different types of IPR - including GIs in countries where they are recognized. However, the EU had threatened not to sign the agreement had GIs been left out. Under WTO rules laid out in the Trade-related aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) agreement members are obliged to protect GIs, but the precise methods for doing so - e.g. defining whether certain name terms can be protected as a GI or must remain generic - is left to individual countries. *AGRA DAILY PRESS*

## **A GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE**

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### **Supplies of Non-GM Soy Run Short**

Last year more than 77 percent of the 90 million hectares of soybeans grown worldwide were genetically modified. This trend is expected to grow making non-GM soy sources even scarcer despite anti-biotech lobby groups. Brazil now plants 16% of all the GM crops in the world, and GM soy is increasingly predominant in most of North, Central and South America especially Brazil, Argentina and Paraguay. While GM soy is still not approved in China or India, China has recently approved GM phytase maize which can be used for animal feed. The only GM crop currently approved for commercial cultivation in India is cotton, and the precautionary principle is used for all food crops.

## **AGRA NEWS**

### **GM Plants Play a Role in the Environment**

According to a study from researchers at the U.S. Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory, genetically modified (GM) plants can play a major role in removing unwanted carbon in the atmosphere. The study emphasizes the importance of bio-energy crops such as perennial grasses including switch grass and short rotation woody crops such as poplar trees. GM carbon-sequestering versions of these crops would mitigate atmospheric carbon accumulation both directly, through carbon sequestration in their roots, and indirectly, by displacing fossil fuel use. Planting GM trees with enhanced photosynthesis could remove 2,000 to 3,000 million tons of carbon each year. *Lawrence Berkeley National*

### **South America Agriculture Ministers Sign Biotechnology Agreement**

The Agricultural ministers for Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay, Uruguay, and members of the Southern Agricultural Council (SAC) signed an agreement in which they agreed that the use of genetically modified organisms presents itself as a tool to support the Region in the challenge of increasing food production and adapting to the challenges brought on by climate change.

<http://www.consejocas.org/>

## **FAS ITALY REGIONAL REPORTING**

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- Food and Agricultural Import Regulations and Standards (FAIRS) (Italy)
- Exporter Guide to the Croatian Market (Bosnia)
- Animal Genetics Update (Bosnia)
- Export Certificate Report 2010 (FAIRS) (Bosnia)
- Grain Update (Croatia)
- Canned Deciduous Fruit 2010 (Greece)

All reports are available at: <http://gain.fas.usda.gov/Pages/Default.aspx>

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