Date: 11/18/2011
GAIN Report Number: ID1144

Indonesia

Post: Jakarta

FAS Jakarta Efforts Support Ag Biotech Progress in Indonesia

Report Categories:
Export Accomplishments - Other

Approved By:
Dennis Voboril
Prepared By:
Jonn Slette/Titi Rahayu

Report Highlights:
Due to consistent U.S. Embassy-Jakarta advocacy in support of agricultural biotechnology, with FAS playing a leading role, Indonesia has made steady progress in developing policies favorable to biotechnology that is leading to greater acceptance of transgenic products. FAS Jakarta estimates that U.S. exports to Indonesia of transgenic agricultural products will approach $2.0 billion in 2011.

General Information:
Indonesia's regulatory framework for transgenic crops has recently undergone a welcomed transition. Prior to 2010, a haphazard and largely non-transparent biotechnology regulatory structure existed in Indonesia with a lack of interest in reform. FAS engaged with the Government of Indonesia (GOI) through a number of activities at improving acceptance and understanding of agricultural biotechnology, as well as the development of Indonesia's regulatory capacities.

In March 2010, FAS Jakarta co-hosted a one-day Food Security workshop entitled: "Indonesia – U.S. Partnership: Agricultural Innovation and Investment to Enhance Food Security". FAS Jakarta co-hosted the workshop with the Indonesian Ministry of Agriculture and funding assistance from the Department of State. The workshop emphasized potential areas of enhanced collaboration, to include regulatory reform based on science and production systems. A main recommendation from the participants was to bring an Indonesian delegation to the Philippines on a biotechnology study tour.

In July 2010, FAS Jakarta, through funding from FAS' Technical Issues Resolution Fund, organized the Philippines trip in coordination with CropLife Asia and the Biotechnology Coalition of the Philippines. Dennis Voboril, Agricultural Counselor of FAS Jakarta accompanied the Indonesian delegation comprised of Indonesian government officials, university researchers, and agricultural stakeholders from the major corn production provinces of Lampung and East Java. The delegation learned about the implementation of regulations and policies in the development of commercialization of transgenic crops in Philippines, research and development of technology that supports public–private partnerships, government policy, and implementation of biotechnology product development.

In October 2010, FAS Jakarta followed up the March workshop by co-hosting the Indonesia – U.S. Agricultural Technology & Investment Forum. The primary objectives of the AG Forum were to advance cooperation with Indonesia on new technologies, including biotechnology; to encourage public/private investment in post-harvest infrastructure; and to develop research and education linkages between Indonesian universities and U.S. land grant universities. Funding for this workshop was also provided by the Department of State and FAS. Texas A&M's Borlaug Institute implemented the Ag Forum. The Forum was successful in addressing regulatory reforms affecting commercialization and trade in Indonesia for biotechnology. A day after the conference, the Indonesian Biosafety Committee for Transgenic Products announced its first regulatory approvals for two biotech corn events. This was seen as a major milestone that has subsequently led to additional approvals for corn, soybeans, and sugar cane transgenic events.

In March 2011, FAS Jakarta sent five members of the Biosafety Committee for Transgenic Products to the United States to develop their knowledge on agriculture biotechnology and science-based international standards, as well as to expose them to U.S. regulations on agriculture biotechnology. Following their return to Indonesia, the Committee worked to quickly provided food safety approval for a number of transgenic events. This eventually resulted in BPOM (Indonesia's food safety agency) issuing food safety certificates for six transgenic corn varieties and two transgenic soybean varieties. FAS Jakarta worked to enhance the knowledge of the Ministry of Environment (MOE), which has a vital decision-making role in approving the environmental safety of transgenic crops. In July 2011, through funding from USDA and USAID, FAS Jakarta sent two representatives from the MOE's

Biosafety Division to an international short course in biosafety at Michigan State University. The MOE participants learned about all aspects of biosafety for environmental release and commercialization of transgenic products. In August 2011, the MOE issued its first environmental safety approval for three transgenic sugarcane varieties.

Because farmers are the immediate benefactors of biotechnology, FAS organized a delegation of Indonesian farm leaders to travel to the Philippines in September 2011. The Indonesian farmers learned firsthand about the Philippines' adoption of biotech and how it benefits Filipino farmers. The Indonesian farmer delegation represented farm leaders from the major corn producing provinces. They met with their Filipino counterparts and learned about the Philippines' nearly decade-long experience in commercially planting and utilizing transgenic corn products. Following the workshop, the farmer participants indicated their strong support for planting transgenic crops, as they believe the technology can greatly improve their family's livelihood.

In October 2011, the Ministry of Agriculture issued a new regulation that accelerates the licensing process, the environmental safety approval processes, and the field trials for transgenic crops. As a result, Post expects expedited progress with regard to Indonesia's ability to import or develop local commercial transgenic seeds. Industry sources indicate they project commercialization of a transgenic crop could occur as early as 2012, with the first crop being either locally-developed drought-resistant sugar cane or Bt corn.