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New GE Regulatory Oversight and Changes to GE Labeling Proposal

Report Categories:

Biotechnology - GE Plants and Animals

Grain and Feed

Oilseeds and Products

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Report Highlights:

On February 4, President Ma signed an amendment shifting regulatory authority of genetically engineered events in animal feed to the Council of Agriculture. Taiwan's Legislative Yuan (LY) also seeks changes to language notified to the World Trade Organization (TBT 168) regarding labeling of GE events. The LY seeks retraction of processed product exemptions and a shortened implementation period, among other changes.

General Information:

Feed Control Act Amendment of February 4, 2015:

On February 4, President Ma signed an amendment to the Feed Control Act (FCA) under which the Council of Agriculture (COA) will become the new competent authority for registration of genetically engineered (GE) events in animal feed. This authority currently rests with Taiwan's Food and Drug Administration (TFDA) under the Ministry of Health and Welfare. TFDA will continue to have responsibility for GE events in food products for human consumption.

The FCA amendment provides a two-year of grace period; all GE products for feed use are required to register with COA by February, 2017. COA is expected to promulgate feed safety assessment guidelines for GE registration within six months, anticipated July 31, 2015. Thereafter, GE feed materials and feed additives will not be allowed for delivery, marketing, import and/or export unless the product is registered and granted approval by COA. GE product developers, life science companies (LSCs), shall register with both agencies (COA and TFDA) if the product is for both food and feed use.

Revision of Yet Effective GE Food Labeling Regulations:

Reference: GAIN TW14033, "Taiwan Authorities and Stakeholders Debate GE Labeling Threshold"

On December 22, 2014, TFDA announced that Taiwan's proposed GE food labeling regulations under the WTO notification G/TBT/N/TPKM/168 will be effective on January 1, 2016. However, industry and TFDA working level contacts report that in a December 29 meeting, the LY's Social Welfare, Health and Environment Committee requested/mandated that TFDA revise portions of the proposed GE food labeling regulations. TFDA is reportedly drafting a new WTO notification, anticipated in February or March, and will provide for a 60 day member comment period. The revisions are likely as follows, according to sources:

- Regulatory scope to be (re)extended to highly processed food products (omitted in the previous WTO draft text as they contain no detectable DNA or protein residues).
- Size of labeling characters will be enlarged from the notified 0.2x0.2 cm to 0.5x0.5 cm at the minimum.
- Implementation dates will move up to June 1, 2014 from previously notified January 1, 2016. Proposed effective dates for unpackaged or bulk pack products will be likely moved up as following:
 - 1st tier: June 1, 2015 from previously notified effective date on January 1, 2016;
 - 2nd tier: October 1, 2015 from previously notified effective date on January 1, 2017; and
 - 3rd tier: January 1, 2016 from previously notified effective date on July 1, 2018.

Impact Estimate, U.S. Agricultural Exports:

The above mentioned GE regulations will primarily impact U.S. corn and soybean exports to Taiwan.

In 2014, the United States exported of US\$1.3 billion worth of feed grains and oilseeds (and products) to Taiwan, accounting for 38% of total U.S. agricultural products exports to the island. The vast majority of corn is destined for animal feed. Whole soybeans are imported and crushed on the island where the majority of the resulting meal is intended for animal feed. However, soybean products also enter the food system as food ingredients, cooking oils, soy sauce, etc.