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GAIN Report

Global Agricultural Information Network

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Swedish Retail Stores Refuse GMO Food

Report Categories:

Biotechnology

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Report Highlights:

According to recent media reports, the Swedish food retail industry is moving towards GMO-free supply.

General Information:

In September this year, the Swedish retail store City gross launched a campaign under the motto "Choose Non-GMO." City gross wants to profile itself as being a completely GMO-free store by requiring non-GMO throughout the whole production process even though there is no GMO present in the end product. (There are currently no food products containing GMOs in Swedish stores.) Therefore, as part of its campaign, City gross is guaranteeing that pork sold in their stores comes from pigs fed with GMO-free feed. The pork is labeled "free from GMOS."

Before 2006, the Swedish meat- and dairy industry voluntarily banned the use of GMO-feed. In 2006, however, the meat industry abandoned its ban due to the higher cost for GMO-free feed (soy). The dairy industry still has its ban in place and pigs are so far the only animals in Sweden that have been fed with GM-feed. The quantities are still small, 95% of all imported soy to Sweden is GM-free soy from Brazil.

City gross' campaign has been criticized by the Swedish National Food Administration (NFA) for being misleading and deconstructive. NFA states that it is unclear if the wording "free from" is allowed. It also believes that the wording implies that the other alternative (GMO) is a worse/bad choice.

Despite the criticism from Swedish authorities, other retail stores are now following City gross' example. Two of the largest retail chains in Sweden, COOP and Axfood, are reportedly planning to be "GMO-free" in a quite near future. The largest retail store ICA is, however, not taking the same track but says that it will provide GMO-free alternatives.

The Swedish wholesale and retail food market is dominated by three nationwide groups - ICA (about 50%), Coop (about 20%) and Axfood (about 15%). City gross is operated by the fourth largest group, Bergendahlsgruppen (about 10%). Bergendahls is mainly active in southern Sweden. Together these four groups account for over 80 percent of the food retail market.