



Official Statement on Court of Appeals Decision on Biotech Crops

CropLife Philippines (“CropLife”), a national organization dedicated to providing innovative plant technologies for agriculture’s advancement; Philippine Seed Industry Association (PSIA), a non-profit organization of private and public institutions involved in the development & distribution of high quality seeds; and the International Service for the Acquisition of Agri-biotech Applications (ISAAA) Inc., a not-for-profit international organization that shares the benefits of bioscience technologies to key stakeholders, particularly resource-poor farmers in developing countries, jointly express our concern on the recent Court of Appeals (CA) decision against two breakthrough crop technologies, namely, Golden Rice and Bt eggplant, and which also halts the review and approval of new and pending applications for contained use, field testing, direct use as food or feed processing, commercial propagation, and importation of *all* biotechnology-derived products such as genetically modified (GM) crops.

Guided by a collective purpose to pursue science-based dialogues on agricultural biotechnology, CropLife, PSIA, and ISAAA respectfully submit our collective statement regarding ongoing questions on the safety and integrity of GM crop technologies, and its statement on the potential impact of the decision to the nation’s food sufficiency.

The CA decision impacted not just Golden Rice and Bt eggplant, the primary subject of the Writ, but all genetically modified crops directly used for food, feed, processing, and cultivation, taking issue with the Joint Department Circular (JDC) No. 1-2021, the country’s main policy framework, and its ability to govern all activities for biotechnology-derived products. Contrary to claims by some, the JDC follows internationally established science-based standards for GM risk assessment, including CODEX Alimentarius (“Food Code”) of the World Health Organization and the Food and Agriculture Organization, the Cartagena Protocol for Biosafety, and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. These standards are followed by other regulatory authorities that approve GM crop cultivation and/or imports, such as the European Union, Canada, Argentina, Brazil, Australia, Japan, the US, and many others.

GM crops are some of the most heavily studied and regulated products. Since becoming available globally in the 1990s, not a single food safety or health issue associated with GM crop use has ever been recordedⁱ. It also takes a long time to develop, test, and approve a GM product before it is sold or imported, lasting approximately 16 years and costing more than a hundred million dollars of investments. Thus, delays and uncertainty pertaining to halting the processing of key GM seeds and technologies are costly for seed technology developers and the entire value chain partners that depend on it (farmers, feed millers, etc.).

The country's biotechnology regulatory system serves as the foundation for the safe introduction, cultivation, and importation for food, feed, and processing of GM corn in 2002. The Philippines was among the first countries in Asia to plant GM corn, more popularly known as 'yellow corn' after its commercial approval more than two decades ago. When it was first introduced in the country, GM yellow corn played a crucial role in helping control the highly destructive insect pest Asian corn borer, which at that time could destroy up to 80 percent of the cropⁱⁱ. It now plays a crucial role in managing above-ground pests like the highly destructive Fall Armyworm (FAW) that impact our corn growers today.

GM yellow corn is now one of the most important and largest crop sectors in the Philippines, with about nearly a million farmers planting yellow corn. Through GM corn, total factor productivity growth is 11.45% higherⁱⁱⁱ. Its yield is close to 40% higher vs conventional corn. GM crop technology also enables farmers to adopt more sustainable agricultural practices, like no-till farming, which pulls carbon out of the atmosphere and stores it in the soil where it supports healthier crops.

The area harvested for GM yellow corn has cumulatively increased to 1.5 million hectares, showing high acceptance and adoption among farmers. Halting all activities on new and pending GM products, including regulatory evaluation and movement of GM seeds, thus impacts the capacity of Philippines farmers to access critical technologies necessary to support their livelihoods and overall national corn production.

The impact of the Court of Appeals decision goes beyond growers and national farm production. It is also worth noting that the country relies on the importation of various GM commodities, such as corn, canola, and soybean, critical macro-ingredients for the local livestock and poultry industry.

Ultimately, the impact of the decision will be felt in every dinner table of Filipino families and livelihoods of local growers. With food prices already high, it's clear that all this will further drive food inflation higher. This also deprives growers with critical farming inputs and sustainable solutions needed to grow our food and support our food systems.

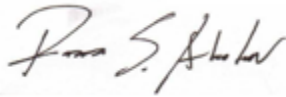
Given major consequences to stakeholders and key activities across the food value chain and considering the latest development on the Motions for Reconsideration, we would like to appeal for support for the immediate implementation of the following:

- a. Continuance of the regulatory processes under JDC 1 series of 2021, including acceptance and granting of new biosafety permits for field tests, importation for direct use, and propagation for GM crops; and
- b. Continuance in the issuance of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Import Clearance (SPSIC) for importing GM products with appropriate biosafety permits.

The challenges of our times, ranging from changing climate, decreasing arable lands, biodiversity loss to pandemics, to feeding and caring for a growing population – will only be solved by modern approaches deeply rooted in science such as agricultural biotechnology solutions. We hope that concerned government agencies will be guided by considerations on the future of Philippine agriculture, sustainable farmer livelihoods, and food security.



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ⁱ National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine Report. Genetically Engineered Crops: Experiences and Prospects

ⁱⁱ Nafus, D. M. and Schreiner, I. H. (1991). Review of the Biology and Control of the Asian Corn Borer, *Ostrinia Furnacalis* (Lep: Pyralidae). *Tropical Pest Management*, 37(1), 41-56.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/09670879109371535>.

ⁱⁱⁱ Alvarez, F., Manalo, A. and Clarete, R. (2021). Economic Assessment of GM Corn Use in the Philippines. *International Journal of Food Science and Agriculture*, 5(1), 115-128. <http://www.hillpublisher.com/journals/jsfa/>