

Brazilian Scientists Develop New GMO Soybean

Reuters

By Reese Ewing

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FOZ DO IGUACU, Brazil, March 3 (Reuters) - Brazil's crop research agency Embrapa has developed a new genetically modified soybean, which if approved for sale could end Monsanto's monopoly in the country, scientists said on Wednesday.

The new GMO soybean works in a similar way to Roundup Ready (RR) Soybeans, whose technology was patented by U.S. biotech seed giant Monsanto Co. and is the only GMO soybean used in Brazil.

"This could help improve public opinion about transgenic soy in Brazil because many people say that we should not legalize GMO soy because Monsanto would have a monopoly," said Joao Veloso Silva, assistant head of research at Embrapa.

Brazil banned GMO food and crops until early 2003 when the government granted amnesty to producers illegally planting GMO soy acquired on a widespread black market.

Illegal GMO soy has been reproduced on the local market clandestinely but was originally smuggled into Brazil from Argentina and Paraguay where RR soy is widely planted.

Embrapa's new GMO soy is resistant to Imidazolinone-based herbicides, which would kill other soybeans that have not had a certain enzyme altered genetically.

Monsanto's RR soy has been genetically altered in a similar way to resist herbicides of the Glyphosate family.

"The new (GMO) soy has been adapted to various types of Brazilian soy and has performed very well in early tests," Carlos Arias, genetic researcher at Embrapa, said on the sidelines of the World Soybean Research Conference.

"This will give the market options but the price of Imidazolinone is still costly, at least twice as expensive as Glyphosate," Arias added.

Silva said Imidazolinone herbicides had already been approved for commercial use in Brazil but the new GMO soy was still in the lengthy approval phase for public use.

"The research demands are strict and there is no date projected for approval for commercial use yet," said Silva.