

China approves import of 8 GM crops

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The Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs of the People's Republic of China has approved imports of eight genetically modified (GM) crops, which includes GM alfalfa for the first time. After a decade-long wait, the Chinese agriculture ministry gave approval for five years.

At the same time, Beijing pledged to speed up the approval process of genetically modified products and promote the commercialisation of genetically modified products in the market under the first phase of the trade agreement reached with the United States in 2020. This approval not only opens the door for foreign countries to supply and export markets but also paves the way for more genetically modified crops to be planted in China.

China is one of the world's largest agricultural markets, but China has so far only allowed the import of genetically modified crops for animal feed and has not approved the cultivation of any major genetically modified food crops. For example, sugarcane, canola, and alfalfa for animal feed and cotton for textiles were approved. The approval process has been slow amid official wariness about GM crops. Therefore, this approval is a positive step in addressing the long-standing challenges faced by biotech developers in obtaining import approvals in China.

Among them, Bayer CropScience's herbicide-tolerant genetically modified alfalfa received its first approval after waiting as long as ten years. For alfalfa growers in all continents of the United States, China's approval of the import of genetically

modified alfalfa undoubtedly provides them with an opportunity to expand their planting scale and also accelerates the commercialisation process of genetically modified alfalfa in the Chinese market. China has also approved three domestically produced genetically modified products, including 2 GM corn projects and 1 GM soybean project. The corn project is the insect-resistant and herbicide-resistant corn BFL4-2 with cry1Ab, cry1F and cp4epsps genes jointly developed by Longping High-Tech and the Academy of Agricultural Sciences, and the herbicide-resistant corn CC-2 with the mark ACC gene jointly developed by China Forest Seed Group and Agricultural University. The soybean project is the insect-resistant soybean CAL16 with cry1Ab/vip3Da gene transgenic developed by Hangzhou Ruifeng.