

THE IMPORT OF GM MAIZE – NDA MEASURES

Hansie Bekker – AFMA (hansie@afma.co.za)

Michelle Vosges - Directorate Genetic Resources, Department of Agriculture
(michellev@nda.agric.za)

During a visit to the Registrar of the GMO Act, Dr Julian Jaftha, on 19 March 2004 to discuss the process for the approval of GM maize, they highlighted certain measures regarding the import of GM maize that have only commodity clearance in South Africa.

The measures are the following:

- *To address the primary concern of spillage or unintentional release during the importation of GM grain with only commodity clearance in South Africa, the transportation of imported whole GM grain is limited. From there the requirement for immediate milling of all consignments imported for use as commodity in SA in all permit issued for the importation of GM grain.*
- *It should be remembered that not all GM maize that have commodity clearance status (food and feed), have general release status as well. Thus, if only one event in the consignment does not have general release status, it means that the whole consignment is subject to immediate milling.*
- *In terms of the permit requirements, the milling is supposed to be done as close as possible to the port of entry to minimise the transportation of whole grain. The grain must be transported from the port of entry directly to the miller on a single trip without offloading and reloading until delivered at the miller.*
- *When applying for clearance, the importer must indicate where the grain is going to be milled and the mode of transport to be used. This information will help the Department of Agriculture (DoA) to trace any spillage into the environment and to identify the responsible company. The imported whole grain should not be sold to inland millers and should not be used in mixed with whole grains feed.*
- *To prevent the purchase of GM material without informed consent, the seller of GM grains or grain products, e.g. animal feeds must clearly indicate the GM status of the consignment to buyers, as this may influence further trade negotiations and the use of these products. One of the conditions in the permit issued to buyers of imported GM grain (i.e. millers)is that all users of the milled product should be informed that the feed may contain GMOs and that it must be used for animal feed only.*

An inspector appointed in terms of the GMO Act, 1997 may at anytime, during reasonable hours, inspect any activity or procedure related to a consignment containing GMOs.

Please note that the application forms for GMO activities have changed. An electronic version of the latest forms is available at the following website:

www.nda.agric.za/docs/geneticresources/geneticcontrol.htm

The Feed Industry

From an industry's perspective it is necessary for all role players to abide by the requirements of the Department for the import of GM maize and to ensure that imported whole grains are not moved all over the country.

As an industry, AFMA has accepted the policy of the National Department of Agriculture regarding the approval and handling of GM grains and should assist them in the process.

AFMA will carry on negotiations with the Registrar for the GMO Act to get commodity approval for all the GM single and stacked events that are being produced in the US. It must, however, be kept in mind that general release takes much longer than commodity clearance and that we might be sitting with the requirement for the milling of grains close to the ports of entry for the next 10 to 20 years or even for ever, unless we could get to a point in future where South Africa accepts the research done overseas to establish the safety of new events.

The Registrar of the GMO Act has again been requested to introduce a special dispensation for the introduction of large quantities of maize in the case of major shortages in the country. Dr Jafhta undertook to submit the issue to the next GMO Act Executive Council meeting for discussion.

The first prize for the feed industry would be a special arrangement whereby any maize from any country could at any time be imported to coastal feed mills for use in animal feeds. It is accepted that such an arrangement would be under very strict conditions regarding the import, transport and milling of the maize at the closest point to the harbour of import. This has been done before without any repercussions and it could work again. We will keep on lobbying for such a dispensation.

The National Grains Council (NCG) in the United States has a website (lepton.marz.com/ncga/search_hybrids/know_where.asp) where all the latest approvals of GM maize events for the US, EU and Japan are being published. This website is also being used locally to establish what new events have been released and must still be approved locally. The relevant companies who have developed the new events are then approached by AFMA to complete the necessary applications for submission to the Registrar of the GMO Act. In this regard, it must also be kept in mind that these companies do not always want general approval for all events since they do not plan on releasing them in South Africa for planting purposes. We may therefore always have the position where only some events will be approved for general release.

The following table shows the events that have so far been approved and what the position in South Africa is:

GM Maize events in South Africa for use as commodity (food/feed)**						
EVENT	CHARACTERISTIC	PRODUCT REGISTRANT TRADE NAME	U.S. APPROVED	JAPAN APPROVED	EU APPROVED	RSA* APPROVED
<u>Bt11*</u>	Cry1Ab corn borer resistance + Glufosinate herbicide tolerance	Syngenta YieldGard/ Liberty Link	YES	YES	YES	YES
<u>Bt176</u>	Cry1Ab corn borer resistance	Syngenta Knockout /Mycogen NatureGuard	YES	YES	YES	YES
<u>TC1507</u>	Corn borer, black cutworm and armyworm resistance + Glufosinate herbicide tolerance	DowAgrosciences Pioneer Hi-Bred Hurculex I	YES	YES	NO	YES
<u>Mon810*</u>	Cry1Ab corn borer resistance	DEKALB YieldGard	YES	YES	YES	YES
<u>Mon810+GA21</u>	Cry1Ab corn borer resistance + Glyphosate herbicide tolerance	DEKALB YieldGard/Roundup Ready	YES	YES	NO	YES
<u>Mon810+Nk603</u>	Cry1Ab corn borer resistance + Glyphosate herbicide tolerance	DEKALB YieldGard/Roundup Ready	YES	NO	NO	YES
<u>Mon810+T25</u>	Cry1Ab corn borer resistance + Glufosinate herbicide tolerance	DEKALB YieldGard Aventis Liberty Link	YES	YES	NO	NO Pioneer to apply
<u>Mon 863</u>	Corn Rootworm Protection	YieldGard Corn Rootworm Control	YES	YES	NO	NO Under review
<u>Mon GA21</u>	Glyphosate Herbicide Tolerance	DEKALB Roundup Ready	YES	YES	NO	YES
<u>Nk603*</u>	Glyphosate herbicide tolerance	DEKALB Roundup Ready	YES	YES	NO	YES
<u>T25</u>	Glufosinate herbicide tolerance	Aventis Liberty Link	YES	YES	YES	YES
<u>Mon 863+GA21</u>	Corn Rootworm Protection + Glyphosate Herbicide Tolerance	YieldGard Corn Rootworm Control Roundup Ready	YES	YES	NO	NO Monsanto to apply
<u>Mon863 + NK603</u>	Corn Rootworm Protection + Glyphosate Herbicide Tolerance	YieldGard Corn Rootworm Control/Roundup Ready	YES	YES	NO	NO Monsanto to apply

*These events have General Release clearance in SA
**Status as on 21 April 2004.