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US GMO rice strain found in RP last year now in China

Unauthorized genetically modified (GMO) rice from the US has now found its way to China's rice supply, Greenpeace warned today after releasing test results by an independent laboratory which shows that a rice brand sold in Beijing supermarkets contained the genetically-altered Bayer LL601, which is unapproved, and hence illegal, in China.

The GMO rice strain found in China is the same GMO strain found in GMO-contaminated "Uncle Sam Long Grain Rice" brand in Philippine supermarkets last year and which have since been recalled from the market due to concerns about its GMO content. Neither China nor the Philippines has approved LL601 GMO rice or any other GMO rice for import or market sale.

"This latest GMO rice contamination case clearly shows the threats that GMOs pose on the world's food supply. What has happened to China has happened to the Philippines and to other countries: these countries have not approved Bayer LL601 or any other GMO rice for import and market sale, and yet these risky and unapproved GMO crops were able to enter the market where they can be bought by unsuspecting consumers," said Daniel Ocampo, Greenpeace Southeast Asia GE campaigner. "The US government bears the responsibility of curbing its export products contaminated by unapproved GMO rice. And this also puts an imperative on other countries to strengthen their biosafety measures to prevent GMO contamination from happening again."

GMO Bayer LL601 figured in a major international rice scandal in 2006 after it contaminated US rice stocks exported to countries where the GMO rice is illegal. The contamination arose from experimental field trials of LL601 in the US which had ended in 2001. The discovery triggered the largest financial and marketing disaster in the history of the US rice industry. At least 30 countries were affected by the contamination and many closed their markets to US rice, including major importers such as the European Union.

The contamination scandal has further prompted rice producers from Thailand and Vietnam, together the world's biggest rice exporters, to sign a memorandum to grow only GMO-free rice. US rice contaminated with LL601 was also found to be illegally sold in Philippine supermarkets last year. The scandal forced the Philippine National Food Authority to demand GMO-free certification from US rice traders and a halt to US rice imports amounting to \$ 20 million. The moratorium on US rice imports to the Philippines continues to this day.

The Bayer LL601 GMO rice scandal and related GMO rice contamination cases since 2006 has caused massive economic damages, estimated at \$1.2 billion, to the US rice industry.

Greenpeace is actively campaigning for GMO-free rice farming, asserting that the genetic modification of food crops 1) endangers human health, 2) harms the environment, and 3) jeopardizes farmers' livelihoods. No scientific study has ever conclusively proven that GMO crops are safe for human consumption, or for propagation in fields. GMO crops further encourage the dangerous corporate control of agriculture, entrenching farmers into almost complete dependence on giant corporations for seeds and technology. Greenpeace is doubly concerned about GMO rice technology. Rice is the most important staple crop in the world, consumed daily by approximately 2.5 billion people.