

GM rice set for go-ahead

http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/english/doc/2005-09/29/content_481642.htm

China could be the first country in the world to approve genetically modified (GM) rice.

The State Agricultural GM Crop Biosafety Committee, the technical body which evaluates GM rice for research and marketing, is likely to meet in November, according to insiders - and Chinese scientists are confident of the progress they have made.

On the agenda will be four varieties of GM rice developed by Chinese scientists - three insect-resistant varieties and a fourth which can withstand bacterial blight.

The four breeds have been undergoing pre-production safety evaluation since last December and the committee's decision is the last step before commercialization.

"China's GM rice technologies lead the world and they are very mature for commercialization," said Zhen Zhu, a leading rice scientist and deputy director of the Bureau of Life Sciences and Biotechnology at the Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS).

A research report published in the prestigious Science magazine revealed that insect-resistant GM rice reduces pesticide use by

nearly 80 per cent. Also, the yield goes up by 6-9 per cent.