

USDA Foreign Agricultural Service

GAIN Report

Global Agricultural Information Network

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Post: Mexico

Centers of Origin for Corn Published in Federal Register

Report Categories:

Biotechnology - GE Plants and Animals

Grain and Feed

Agriculture in the News

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Report Highlights:

On November 2, 2012, the Mexican Secretariat of Agriculture and Secretariat of Environment published an Agreement on the areas delineating the centers of origin and centers of corn genetic diversity in Mexico's Federal Register (*Diario Oficial*). As informed previously, this map corresponds only to the northern Mexican states and contains areas which were previously approved for experimental and pilot phases such as in the states of Chihuahua and Sinaloa.

General Information:

Disclaimer: This summary is based on a *cursory* review of the subject announcement and therefore should not, under any circumstances, be viewed as a definitive reading of the resolution in question, or of its implications for U.S. agricultural export trade interests. In the event of a discrepancy or discrepancies between this summary and the complete resolution or announcement as published in Spanish, the latter shall prevail.

Title of Notice: Agreement to Determine the Centers of Origin and Centers of Genetic Diversity of Corn in Mexico has been published in Mexico's Federal Register.

Type of Resolution: Final Assessment.

Publication Date: November 2, 2012

Products Affected: Corn Grain and Seeds.

Agency in Charge: Secretariat of Agriculture, Livestock, Rural Development, Fishery and Food (SAGARPA) and Secretariat of Environment and natural Resources (SEMARNAT).

Background: On November 2, 2012, the Secretariat of Agriculture (SAGARPA) and the Secretariat of Environment (SEMARNAT) published in Mexico's Federal Register an [Agreement](#) to Determine the Centers of Origin and Centers of Genetic Diversity of Corn in Mexico. As mention in the recent GAIN report [MX2072](#) (*Biotech Corn and Centers of Origin in Mexico*), this agreement is part of the legal process required by Mexico's Biosafety Law and includes a map delineating the areas in seven northern states of Mexico where the use of GM corn seeds will be forbidden. In addition, the law requires very strict requirements with storage and movement of GM corn grains through the areas delineated as centers of origin.

According to Provision 86 of the Biosafety Law, the centers of origin and genetic diversity of corn in Mexico as well as the geographic areas in which the related species in question are found shall be determined jointly by a resolution issued by SEMARNAT and the SAGARPA. Both Secretariats have established their resolutions issuing the measures required for the protection of such species and geographic areas only for seven States for now.

Official Map

The shaded areas with have been determined to be either centers of origin for corn (and related species) and centers of genetic diversity covers a significant potion of total landscape (GAIN MX2072). This shaded area includes land that previously received permits for experimental and pilot release of GM corn varieties. The Agreement allows for 2.1 million hectares of land to be eligible for potential GM corn planting in seven northern Mexican states. However, total area suitable for corn production in this area is only 562,133 hectares. The rest is desert or land not suitable for corn production. In addition, the Agreement calls for a zero tolerance level for GM corn seed in all areas determined as centers of origin for corn. Many opponents to the Agreement claim that the methodology used to develop the map was not scientifically based and used out-dated information.

COMMENT: It is important to note that the Agreement can be modified after a year if/when new scientific data is brought to the Mexican government's attention which clearly show that areas now

considered centers of origin and centers of corn genetic diversity are incorrect. While many supporters of biotechnology are disappointed with the Agreement and map highlighting the centers of origin for corn and centers of corn genetic diversity, others are taking an optimistic view as at least there will now be certainty as to where progress can be made in the future. Prior to this, uncertainty was always lingering causing major problems to the biotechnology companies striving to improve yields and profits for Mexican corn farmers. **END COMMENT.**