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Report Highlights:
This report gives an overview of the situation for genetically engineered products with regard to regulation, policy, and the marketing environment in Norway.

General Information:

SECTION I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

While Norway is not a member of the European Union (EU), it is a member of the European Economic Agreement (EEA). Consequently, Norway has implemented most of EU's legislation with regard to biotech feed, seed and food. It has, however, the authority to reject any EU-approved biotech product that does not meet the requirements of Norwegian domestic legislation. Only four genetically engineered (GE) products have actually received approval for marketing in Norway -- one line of tobacco and three lines of carnations. The Norwegian fish industry is, however, allowed to use certain GM plants that were already on the market at the time of Norway's implementation of EU legislation. Even so, the fish industry does reportedly not use any GM feed.

While there is no general ban on genetically modified organisms (GMO) products in Norway, there is no commercial production of biotech crops in Norway and no GM products are imported into the country.

This report provides an overview of the situation for genetically engineered products with regard to regulation, policy, and the marketing environment in Norway.

SECTION II. PLANT BIOTECHNOLOGY TRADE AND PRODUCTION

The United States was a major supplier of soybeans to the Norwegian crushing industry through 1996 when GM soybeans were commercially introduced in the United States. U.S. soybean imports have since dropped to zero due to the food and feed industry's reluctance to accept products of genetic engineering. In 2010, Norway's imports of soybeans were valued at about USD 195 million, none of which originated in the US.

SECTION III. PLANT BIOTECHNOLOGY POLICY

Regulatory Framework

Responsibility for the monitoring and enforcement of laws and regulations on biotech in Norway is divided between the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Environment and the Ministry of Health. The Directorate for Nature Management is the authority responsible for feed and seed; the Norwegian Food Safety Authority is responsible for biotech food.

While Norway is not a member of the European Union (EU), it is a member of the European Economic Agreement (EEA). Consequently, Norway has implemented EU legislation with regard to biotech feed, seed and food. The primary Norwegian legislation on GE– the Gene Technology Act of 1993 – is, however, more restrictive then EU legislation in the sense that it also lays down requirements that GM products should be ethically justified and provide societal benefits as well as be in line with sustainable development. Norwegian legislation does also prohibit the use of antibiotic resistance marker genes.

Through the adaptation of the EEA agreement, Norway has the authority to reject any EU-approved

biotech product that does not meet the requirements of Norwegian domestic legislation.

Approved Biotech Crops

As mentioned above, even if a product has been authorized for sale and distribution in the EU and thereby in principle within EEA countries, Norwegian authorities may decide to reject the GE product in Norway if it does not meet the requirements of the Gene Technology Act. While the EU directive allows consideration of health and environmental issues, the Norwegian Act also allows consideration of ethical issues, sustainable development and socially justifiable use of GM products. This difference in assessment has led to Norway's rejection of several GM products approved in the EU. Only four GE products have actually received approval for marketing in Norway -- one line of tobacco and three lines of carnations.

Before Norway's implementation of EU legislation in 2005, Norway permitted the import and use of certain GM feed products without any national approval requirements. For products already in the market at the time of implementation, interim rules were imposed allowing companies to apply for continued use of these products. The fish industry received approval for the use of 19 GM varieties in fish feed. This derogation has been extended several times. Current derogation is valid until September 15, 2012. Although the fish industry does reportedly not use any GM feed, it would like to keep the window open due to the limited supply of fish meal and fish oil used in fish feed production. Expectations are that the fish farming industry will depend more on plant-based products in the future.

Field Testing of Biotech Crops

Norway does allow for field testing of biotech crops but there are currently no ongoing trials.

Co-existence

There are currently no Norwegian regulations established for co-existence of GM crops with conventional or organic production. In August 2007, the Norwegian Food Safety Authority proposed regulations for the prevention of adventitious contamination of GMO-free products with biotech products. The proposal includes compensation for producers who detect GM material in conventional and organic products and is based on EU guidelines for coexistence from 2003. The Norwegian government is now reviewing the proposal again to reflect changes in the new EU guidelines from 2010.

Labeling

On April 18, 2004, the EU implemented Regulation 1829/2003 on Genetically Modified Food and Feed and Regulation 1830/2003 on Traceability and Labeling of Genetically Modified Organisms and the Traceability of Food and Feed Products produced from Genetically Modified Organisms. These polices were integrated into Norwegian regulations in September 2005.

All food and feed produced from GMOs, including products that no longer contain detectable traces of GMOs, must be labeled. The allowable adventitious presence level is set at 0.9 percent for EU approved GMOs and 0.5 percent for products that have not yet been approved but have successfully completed an EU or Norwegian risk assessment. (The 0.5 percent provision expired in the EU in 2007.) All products testing above these levels must be labeled.

The regulation does not require labeling of products that are not food ingredients, such as processing aids. Meat, milk or eggs obtained from animals fed with GM feed or treated with GM medicinal products do not require GM labeling.

Norway has no LLP (low level presence) legislation in place but is planning to harmonize its national legislation with EU's legislation on low level presence (LLP) of GMOs in feed imports. However, they do not appear to be in a hurry to do so.

Cartagena Biosafety Protocol

Norway is a signatory to the Cartagena Biosafety Protocol. The Cartagena Protocol is implemented in Norway through several legislative measures applicable to the production and use of products of biotechnology in Norway, including transport, import and marketing.

Biotech-related Trade Barriers

As mentioned above, Norwegian legislation on GMOs is highly integrated with EU legislation on approval and labeling of biotech products. The complexity of this legislation effectively prohibits U.S. exports to Norway.

SECTION IV. PLANT BIOTECHNOLOGY MARKETING ISSUES

Due to Norway's restrictive GMO legislation and the food processing and retail sectors' concerns about the possibility of negative consumer reaction and anti-biotech demonstrations, there are currently no GM products on the Norwegian market.

SECTION VI. ANIMAL BIOTECHNOLOGY

Development and Use:

There are no GE animals for food production in Norway. However, GE animals, mainly fish and mice, are used by universities and industry for biological and medical research. Norway was indeed the first country conducting research on GE salmons in the 80s, but strong opinions against this research led to an ending of it. Today, Norway does not invest in research on GE salmon.

Regulation:
Genetic engineering of all life organisms is regulated in the Norwegian Gene Technology Act, which is supplemented by a number of ordinances and regulations. According to Regulation on the Contained Use of Genetically Modified Animals, anyone using genetically modified animals, including fish, in contained conditions (e.g. in animal house or similar facility) must apply for approval from the Norwegian Directorate of Health.

Stakeholder/Public Opinion:
The use of genetic engineering of animals for use in agriculture would most likely not be supported by the public in Norway. The use of animals for medical research aimed at finding cures for diseases is found more acceptable.

International Organizations:
Norway is an active member in OIE and Codex. The GE animals issue has so far not been one of Norway's focus areas in discussions in these organizations.