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Date:

GAIN Report Number:

Philippines

Post: Manila

Philippine Supreme Court Reverses Decision

Report Categories:

Biotechnology - GE Plants and Animals

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Report Highlights:

In a July 26, 2016 press briefing, the Philippine Supreme Court (SC) reversed its December 2015 decision stopping the field testing, propagation, commercialization, and importation of genetically enhanced (GE) products in the country. As such, Bt talong (eggplant), whose field tests ended prior to the December ruling, is expected to proceed with its commercialization application under the Joint Department Circular (JDC) approved on March 2016. Bt eggplant is expected to be the first GE crop developed locally to be commercialized in the Philippines. The full SC decision is expected sometime September 2016.

General Information:

The Philippines Supreme Court (SC) in its July 26, 2016 Press Briefing (attached), unanimously reversed its December 2015 decision which put to a halt the field testing, propagation, commercialization, and importation of GE products in the country.

The SC granted the motions for consideration filed by the following proponents of Bt talong (eggplant):

- International Service for the Acquisition of Agri-Biotech Applications Inc.
- Environmental Management Bureau
- Crop Life Philippines, Inc.
- University of the Philippines Los Baños Foundation, Inc.
- University of the Philippines

The ruling also dismissed the petition for Writ of Continuing Mandamus and Writ of Kalikasan filed by Greenpeace Southeast Asia (Philippines) and Magsasaka at Siyentipiko sa Pagpapaunlad ng Agrikultura, on the ground of mootness.

In December 2015, the SC had stopped the field trials of Bt talong and also stopped temporarily the applications for field testing, contained use, propagation as well as the importation of GE products. This decision also voided existing GE regulations as embodied in Department of Agriculture's Administrative Order No. 8 or AO 8 (refer to GAIN Report "Philippine Biotechnology Regulations to be Replaced"). In response, a Joint Department Circular was drafted and approved replacing AO 8, allowing GE imports and their use. Contacts expect the application to commercialize Bt talong to proceed after food and feed safety requirements are complied with.

The full SC decision is expected to be released in a week or two, according to contacts.