

Transgenic Corn Threatens Brazil's Biodiversity, Says Commission

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Next month, Brazil's National Technical Commission on Biosecurity (CNTBio) expects to begin its analysis of cases involving transgenic corn.

According to Jairon Nascimento, executive secretary of the commission, the cases are already in the commission's hands and have been analyzed in part.

The Brazilian Ministry of Agriculture performed tests that confirmed the presence of transgenic corn in Rio Grande do Sul.

"The processes in the CTNBio involving corn have been analyzed in part, and one of the decisions was to obtain the opinions of outside consultants," Nascimento said.

"These opinions have already been submitted, and it is up to us, when we go back to work in February, to study these opinions."

The executive secretary of the CTNBio believes that during the course of 2006 the analyses of these processes will be concluded, and technical opinions will be rendered for each of them.

According to Nascimento, the CTNBio has five corn samples that are serving as objects of analysis. He believes that the swiftness of the task will depend on the commission's first meeting.

"The next meeting of the CTNBio is in February. I think that, depending on the situation and the desire of the full body and the members of the CTNBio, these processes may or may not be expedited.

"Inspection is not one of the CTNBio's responsibilities. Controlling the entry of illegal seeds into the country is the responsibility of organs of inspection, such as the IBAMA, ANVISA, and the Ministry of Agriculture. The CTNBio has done its part, which is to analyze the cases."

With respect to analysis of the documents, Nascimento claims that the study should be done carefully, since the situation of corn is more problematic, due to the risks of pollination.

"This question of corn is not so simple, considering that corn is a species subject to cross-pollination. There are risks of cross-fertilization with other species, which represents a threat to Brazil's biodiversity, and that is the reason that the CTNBio is being cautious in the analysis of these processes."

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