

Corn Growers To Host Workshop On Biotechnology, GMO Crops

TULSA, Okla. - As part of its Farmer Choice-Customer First Program, the American Corn Growers Association will host the first of a series of workshops on the issues of biotechnology and genetically modified crops.

The workshop will be April 8 at the Airport Ramada Inn in Spokane, Wash. beginning at 8:30 a.m.

"The entire debate over GMOs has caused a great deal of uncertainty for America's farmers. This workshop will try to address some of the issues surrounding the controversy and

provide agricultural producers with an opportunity to receive some answers to their many questions," said Gary Goldberg, chief executive officer of the American Corn Growers Association (ACGA).

The program consists of some of the most outstanding players in the field of GMOs. Dan McGuire, program director of the ACGA, will give a comprehensive explanation of the Farmer Choice-Customer First program and what its objectives are and how it affects U.S. exports. McGuire has extensive

experience in the grain export field, having served as past executive director of the Nebraska Wheat Commission and executive director of the Interstate Grain Compact Marketing Commission.

Also on the program is Mark Hegg, the National Farmers Organization national director from the state of Washington to discuss marketing opportunities for non-GMO crops, Chrys Ostrander, president of Spokane Tilth, will discuss the ramifications of GMOs on organic farmers and the new USDA guidelines for organic products. Fuji Seyama, department manager, feed grain department for the Marubeni America Corporation, will discuss Asian requirements for delivery of GMO and non-GMO grain.

Also invited are Dr. Susan Wuerthele, regional toxicologist for the Environmental Protection Agency, to share her knowledge of the scientific affects of GMOs, and John Oades, director, U.S. Wheat Associates, to address overseas export markets for wheat.

USDA Sets Meetings On Organic Production

WASHINGTON, D.C. - The USDA will convene three public meetings to discuss the production and handling of aquatic animals to be labeled as "organic."

Meetings will be April 10 at the Mobile Convention Center in Mobile, Ala; April 12 at the Anchorage Hilton in Anchorage, Alaska; and May 3 at the Providence Biltmore in Providence, R.I. Public comments on this issue are also requested.

"We are conducting these meetings as an outgrowth of our new proposal for uniform and consistent national standards for organic food. The meetings will help us gather input to develop aquatic standards," said Kathleen Merrigan, administrator of USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service.

The Organic Foods Production Act of 1990 was designed to establish national standards governing the marketing of certain agricultural products as organically produced products, assure consumers that organically produced products meet a consistent standard, and facilitate commerce in fresh and processed food that is organically produced. AMS' National

Organic Program was created to implement the provisions of the act.

Federal entities that share regulatory authority over the production and marketing of aquatic animals include the National Marine Fisheries Service of the Department of Commerce, the Fish and Wildlife Service of the Department of the Interior, the Food and Drug Administration of the Department of Health and Human Services, and the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service of USDA. AMS will consult with these agencies in developing its organic standards.

To attend one of the public meetings and provide oral comments, individuals should register with AMS before the meeting date by calling the National Organic Program at (202) 720-3252 or by sending an e-mail message to nop.register@usda.gov. Written comments may be sent to Mark Keating, USDA-AMS-TMP-NOP, Room 2510-S, P.O. Box 96456, Washington, D.C. 20090-6456. Comments may be submitted by e-mail to aquatic.comment@usda.gov. For more information, call Mark Keating at (202) 720-3252.

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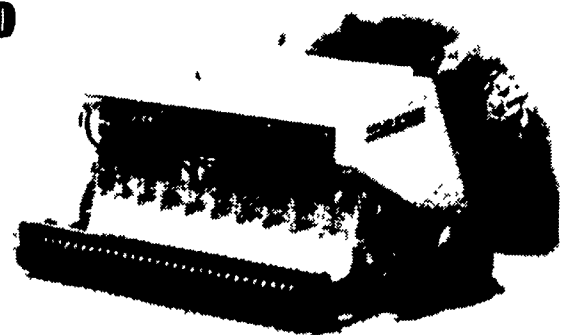
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