



Voluntary Report - public distribution

Date: 2/9/2001

GAIN Report #KS1004

Korea, Republic of

Biotechnology

Labeling of Unprocessed Commodities Enhanced through Biotechnology - Effective March 1, 2001 2001

Approved by: **Michael T. Henney**
U.S. Embassy, Seoul

Prepared by: Seung Ah Chung

Report Highlights: Effective March 1, 2001, the Ministry of Agriculture & Forestry will require unprocessed soybeans, soybean sprouts and corn enhanced through biotechnology be labeled. A three-percent tolerance threshold is in effect initially. The threshold level is subject to reduction to one-percent at some unspecified time in the future. Four label options are authorized. Certification and verification are to be conducted via social documentation and scientific testing.

Includes PSD changes: No
Includes Trade Matrix: No
Unscheduled Report
Seoul [KS1], KS

The Ministry of Agriculture & Forestry Labeling Guidelines for Biotech Product

Effective March 1, 2001, the Ministry of Agriculture & Forestry (MAF) will require unprocessed soybeans, soybean sprouts and corn enhanced through biotechnology be labeled if the shipment contains a 3-percent or higher biotech(nologically)-enhanced component.

Effective March 2002, potatoes enhanced through biotechnology will be subject to this labeling requirement.

The Gist of the MAF Guidelines for biotech products (hereinafter called The Guidelines) follows:

Commodities Subject to Biotech Labeling: The Guidelines Article 3, as authorized by provision 1-3, Article 26 of the Presidential Decree of Agricultural & Fishery Product Quality Control Act, identifies the following biotech commodities subject to labeling:

1. Soybeans
2. Corn
3. Soybean Sprout
4. Potato (*beginning March 2002)

Please note: Only a commodity that has NOT undergone processing (i.e., crushing, cutting, pressing, heating, etc.), by that maintaining its original form, is subject to the biotech labeling requirement. Labeling of bean sprouts does, however, include those that have gone through the cutting process.

(Post comment: Effective July 13, 2001, Korea will require labeling of processed food products made using biotech-enhanced raw ingredients. We will provide similar information on labeling requirements for labeling of processed products containing a biotech-enhanced component in a separate voluntary report.)

Maximum Threshold: If a shipment contains 3 percent or higher of a biotech-enhanced component, labeling as containing a biotech component is required. (The Guidelines note this threshold is subject to gradual lowering to the level of one percent in the future depending on the precision of the verification technics and international trends.)

If a shipment contains less than 3 percent of a biotech-enhanced component, labeling as containing a biotech component is not required. The Guidelines note the threshold level is set to allow for the unintentional mixing of biotech-enhanced products with non-biotech enhanced products even when one segregates those products in the production and marketing process.

How to Label: The Guidelines Article 4, as authorized by provision three of Article 27 of the above identified Presidential Decree, notes we should label shipments as follow:

1. For shipments that contain 100 Percent biotech enhanced products, the label should state:
 - “Genetically modified ‘commodity’” (i.e., state either soybean or corn)
 - “Bean sprouts grown with genetically modified soybeans”
2. For shipments that contain biotech enhanced products, the label should state:
 - “Containing genetically modified ‘commodity’” (i.e., state either soybean or corn)
 - “Containing bean sprouts grown with genetically modified soybeans”
3. For shipments that may contain biotech enhanced products, the label should state:
 - “It may contain genetically modified ‘commodity’” (i.e., state either soybean or corn)
 - “It may contain bean sprouts grown with genetically modified soybeans”

Non-GMO Labeling or GMO Free Labeling: Voluntary labeling of “Non-GMO” or “GMO Free” is permitted only if the shipment is of 100-percent non biotech-enhanced products. In case of “Non-GMO” or “GMO Free” labeling, the maximum threshold allowance is “zero.”

Who is Responsible for Labeling? : Sellers at every stage of the distribution channel, such as producers, importers, intermediaries, wholesalers, retailers, re-packer, etc., are responsible. Products sold in package form must be labeled. Products sold in bulk form should be labeled by post or sign board.

Implementation: On March 1, 2001, labeling requirements go into force for soybeans, corn, and bean sprouts. In March 2002, labeling requirements will go into force for potatoes.

Certification: To qualify for meeting the threshold requirement, certificates will be furnished showing that the products were segregated and controlled to Identity Preserve (IP) non biotech-enhanced products from the farm through the marketing system. Certificates can be issued by the exporting country’s government, preferred if available but not mandatory yet, or by the seed seller, producer, distributor, etc.

Verification: The Guidelines Article 6 delegates investigation of labeling of GM agricultural products to the National Agricultural Product Quality Control Service (NAPQCS). NAPQCS is authorized to collect samples and conduct sample verification during an investigation. For the first year - March 2001 through February 2002 - NAPQCS is authorized to use the National Agricultural Sciences and Technology (NAST), Rural Development Administration, MAF, to help in the verification of samples.

NAPQCS is authorized to use surveillance monitoring program such as social verification, (i.e., certificates, documents, etc.) or scientific verification (i.e., laboratory testing, etc.) to monitor compliance with labeling Guidelines.