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# **Korea, Republic of**

## **Biotechnology**

### **Enforcement of Biotech Labeling for Unprocessed**

### **Commodities**

### **2001**

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**Report Highlights:** On Feb.19, 2001, the Ministry of Agriculture & Forestry issued a press release on an enforcement plan on biotech labeling for unprocessed soybeans, corn and bean sprouts. MAF will focus on educating and guiding the domestic industry that improperly label products during the six months of the new regulation, rather than penalizing. However, MAF will start to collect samples and test for biotech ingredients beginning March 1. And, it will impose penalties against businesses that intentionally falsely mislabel.

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

On February 18 and 19, major Korean newspapers and a wireless news service reported on the

Ministry of Agriculture & Forestry (MAF)'s plan to give a six-month interim enforcement of labeling requirement period for unprocessed agricultural commodities, enhanced through biotechnology (hereinafter refer to as "biotech ag. commodity") on March 1, 2001. The newspapers quoted a press release issued by MAF on Feb. 19 as a source of information. News articles reported a market rumor that MAF would postpone enforcement of labeling requirements for biotech ag. commodities for six months.

Following is what FAS/Seoul has confirmed with officials at MAF on media coverage on alleged postponement of biotech labeling and details on a MAF plan for enforcement of biotech labeling requirements.

- On Feb. 19 MAF released a plan and guidelines about enforcement of labeling requirements for biotech ag. commodities. In the press release, MAF provided a three-step plan;

1<sup>st</sup> step (January and February) - for the two months prior to March 1, MAF is doing promotion activities and education programs on new biotech labeling requirements. MAF is sending letters industry to inform them of new biotech labeling requirements and conducting preliminary monitoring in markets, analysis and others.

2<sup>nd</sup> step (March to August) - for six months after the new requirement goes into effect on March 1, MAF will focus on education and guidance programs to industry so as to lead to smooth enforcement of new biotech labeling requirements. During this period MAF will continue to visit industry and conduct PR, education programs, and others.

3<sup>rd</sup> step (after September 1) - MAF will regulate GMO labeling in a full scale using both social verification (e.g. documentation, others) and scientific verification (e.g. test monitoring).

- Some industry sources misinterpreted the second step as MAF postponement of enforcement of biotech labeling until September 1. MAF clarified that this is not postponement of enforcement of biotech labeling requirements. MAF explained they would rather focus on education and guidance programs to industry for six months after March 1. This is to pursue smooth enforcement of new biotech labeling. During the second step period, however, MAF will collect samples and test for presence of biotech ingredients. If companies unintentionally mislabel products during that period, MAF will advise or give guidance to them instead of imposing penalties. However, companies that intentionally mislabel will be subject to penalties.

- Again, please note that there is no change in the enforcement date of MAF biotech labeling. Beginning March 1, MAF will require biotech labeling for anyone who sells three commodities, soybeans, corn and bean sprouts and collect and test samples.

\* A person responsible for labeling is a seller (this includes importers, wholesalers, retailers, bean sprout producer). Details on labeling requirements for biotech commodities can be obtained from a voluntary report on biotech labeling prepared by FAS/Seoul on Feb. 9, 2001.

\* Penalties for false labeling and others are as follows;

- for false labeling: jail sentence for three-year or less or fine for 30 million won or less
- for no labeling: fine for 10 million won or less