



Foreign Agricultural Service

**GAIN Report**

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## **Argentina**

### **Biotechnology**

## **New Biotech Crop Approved in Argentina**

### **2001**

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#### **Report Highlights:**

**On April 26, 2001 the Government of Argentina approved a new biotech cotton variety. This is the first new biotech variety approved since 1998. With this approval, Argentina has now six biotech varieties approved for commercial distribution.**

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Includes PSD changes: No  
Includes Trade Matrix: No  
Unscheduled Report  
Buenos Aires [AR1], AR

The Argentine Secretariat of Agriculture approved on April 26 the commercialization of a new biotech crop: Monsanto's Roundup Ready (RR) cotton. With this decision, the Government of Argentina (GOA) has adopted what appears to be a new policy towards biotechnology, after maintaining an unofficial moratorium on new biotech approvals for the last 3 years.

Argentina now has 6 biotech crops approved, the other 5 approved during 1996 - 1998 (BT cotton, 3 corn varieties and RR Soybeans) . In 1998, the GOA suddenly stopped the commercial approval of biotech crops due to the rising controversy over the risk of biotech crops for human health and safety of the environment. The GOA was particularly concerned about losing international markets if it approved new biotech varieties that were not already approved in major markets.

Approval of the new biotech cotton follows shortly after the announcement by the Secretary of Agriculture Marcelo Regunaga (who took office in March) that the Government of Argentina would be more aggressive in promoting biotech crops.

Greenpeace has been active in Argentina in opposing approval of new biotech varieties and lobbying for labeling of biotech products. The organization strongly criticized the GOA for this approval arguing that this new variety poses a risk on the environment and destroys communities of weeds.

The adoption of biotech crops has been faster among more progressive producers. Although we believe that biotech cotton will eventually represent most of the cotton planted in Argentina, in the midterm its adoption is running relatively slow due to its perceived of higher cost. Private sources report that the cost of Bt cotton is 5 times higher than conventional/traditional seed. According to these sources, one hectare planted with Bt cotton costs US\$ 100 and one hectare with conventional seed costs US\$ 20. Prices for RR cotton are not available yet. Planted area for Bt cotton represents 12 to 15% of the total planted area in Argentina. This new variety will not replace Bt cotton since it has a different use. RR cotton is resistant to glifosate and not to insects like Bt cotton.