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## **Report Name:** Agricultural Biotechnology Annual

**Country:** Dominican Republic

**Post:** Santo Domingo

**Report Category:** Biotechnology and Other New Production Technologies

**Prepared By:** Jennifer Caceres

**Approved By:** Frederick Giles

### **Report Highlights:**

The Dominican Republic continues to be a strong market for U.S. bulk agricultural products (e.g., corn), intermediate goods (e.g., Soybean meal), and high value consumer-oriented products (e.g., processed food products), reaching a total export value of \$1.59 billion in 2021. Despite a 2015 law that explicitly states the need for mandatory labeling of genetically-engineered (GE) products, which could potentially affect imports of GE raw materials, the law has yet to advance along the path to implementation and is not expected to do so in the short term.

**Executive summary**

The Dominican Republic (DR) represents an important destination for U.S. feed grains, oilseeds, and processed food products. Although the DR has signed the Cartagena Protocol and a [2015 law](#) which would restrict imports of genetically engineered (GE) products, the Government of the Dominican Republic (GoDR) has never actively sought to restrict such imports and has given no indication that it intends to do so.

Currently, the DR does not produce any GE crops or animals, nor are there any under development at this time. In recent years, however, more than a dozen conventionally-bred crops have been reproduced in the DR via low-tech tissue culture, thereby contributing significantly to ensure crops, such as plantains and bananas, are resistant to pests and diseases. Additionally, there is no use of microorganisms to produce products with an economic value for commercial sale.

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## CHAPTER 1: PLANT BIOTECHNOLOGY

### PART A: Production and trade

#### *a) Research and Product development:*

In 2012, the Dominican Institute for Research in Agriculture, Livestock and Forestry (*IDIAF*) started developing banana plants resistant to black sigatoka (*Mycosphaerella fijiensis*). *IDIAF* developed genetically engineered material with training received from Mexico at the Research Center and Advanced Studies (CINVESTAV) and created experimental trials in its laboratories. However, *IDIAF* did not release these developments to the field due to lack of a regulatory framework and mitigation protocols in the country.

#### *b) Commercial production:*

There is no biotech production in the DR, and the country does not plan to pursue it at this time. Several years ago, mid-sized local corn producers from the northern DR publicly requested that the Government approve the use of GE products in order to address the competitive challenges posed by large-scale corn imports. Similar requests have been repeated from time to time. Local producers have questioned the “inflexible” position of the Dominican Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) in prohibiting imports of corn seeds and other GE products that could help increase productivity. Despite recent Government efforts to increase local corn production response to increased global prices, their position on importing GE corn seeds has not shifted.

#### *c) Exports:*

N/A

#### *d) Imports:*

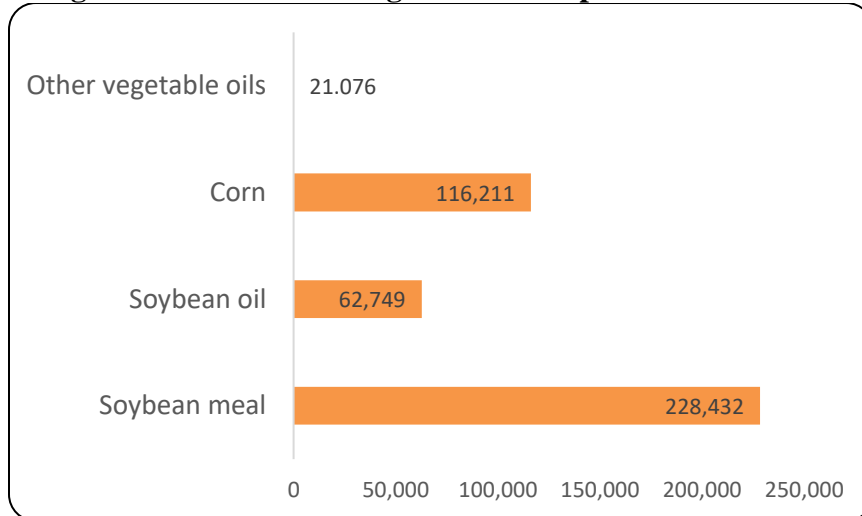
Almost all coarse grains and soybean products in the DR are imported from the United States, Brazil, Argentina, and other markets where GE crop varieties are common. Therefore, the poultry, swine, and dairy industries rely heavily on GE feed inputs for livestock development and finishing. The DR’s food processing industry also continues to rely heavily on U.S. soybeans and other oilseeds, as well as U.S. corn, to meet its needs.

Currently, no GE-specific import requirements are being enforced. Previously, the GoDR required that phytosanitary certificates accompanying corn shipments state that the product “does not contain GMO material.” However, this requirement was not enforced except for a brief period in 2015 when MoA stopped two U.S. corn shipments, demanding certification stating that the product “does not contain GMO material.” After complaints from private industry, MoA permitted the entry of the product and committed to removing this requirement from the general corn import requirements. Later in 2015, the requirement was formally removed.

At this time, FAS Santo Domingo is not aware of any efforts by the GoDR, private importers, or Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) to actively exclude GE products. Despite a 2015 law that explicitly states the need for mandatory labeling of GE products, which could potentially affect the importation of GE raw materials, the law has yet to advance along the path to implementation and is not expected to do so in the short term. (Please see below section on labeling, Chapter 1, Part B, section g.)

The following figure captures export values for selected U.S. agricultural products to the Dominican market during calendar year (CY) 2020:

**Figure 1. United States Agricultural Exports to DR in US\$**



Source: Built by FAS Santo Domingo with information from Trade Data Monitor (TDM)

**e) Food aid:**

Historically, the DR has not been a regular recipient of food aid. However, in recent years, the country has received food aid from the United States. During 2011, through the Food for Progress (FFPr) Program, the DR received a donation of 13,400 MT of soybean meal, which was monetized in the DR to carry out a bi-national program with Haiti. Also, in 2015, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020 and 2021 the DR received donations of soybean oil, yellow grease, and tallow for two FFPr programs being implemented in the DR. The presence of GE material has not been an issue in the country’s acceptance of these programs, nor are they expected to be a point of contention in the future.

**f) Trade barriers:**

As described above, the DR previously had rules in place that required phytosanitary certificates accompanying corn shipments to state that the product “does not contain GMO material.” However, this requirement was removed in 2015, and the country continues to import large volumes of corn of both U.S. and South American origin (usually in excess of 1.4 million metric tons annually).

## PART B: Policy

### a) Regulatory framework:

**Table 1. Common Legal Terms and Definitions**

<b>Legal term (in official language)</b>	<b>Legal Term (in English)</b>	<b>Laws and Regulations where term is used</b>	<b>Legal Definition (in English)</b>
Organismo Vivo Modificado (OVM)	Living Modified Organism (LMO)	-Law 219-15 -Regulation RTD 53	Any living organism that possesses a novel combination of genetic material obtained through the use of modern biotechnology.
Biotecnología Moderna	Modern Biotechnology	-Law 219-15	Application of a) In vitro nucleic acid techniques, including recombinant DNA and RNA and direct injection of nucleic acids in cells and organelles, and b) fusion of cells across families taxonomic barriers that transcend natural, physiological, reproductive or recombination, and that are not techniques used in the selection and conventional hybridization.
Ingeniería Genética	Genetic Engineering	Law 219-15	Laboratory or industries' techniques used to alter the genetic composition of organisms, so that they can synthesize higher quantities of some compounds that are already in their repertoire or form compounds entirely new, adapt to drastically different environments, etc. Frequently these techniques involve the modification of genes, so that the normal systems of sexual or asexual transmission are surpassed.
Movimiento Transfronterizo	Cross-border movement	Law 219-15	Movement of a LMO from one country to another, except for what is considered as unintentional movement.

The Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources (MIMARENA), the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA), and the Ministry of Public Health (MSP) work together on the development and implementation of the national biotech policy. For example, the MoA (specifically its Plant Health Department) is responsible for regulating and assuring the safe entry of plant products into the country. This institution also collaborates and coordinates with the MSP on health-related issues concerning GE materials. Several other public sector entities comprise a commission that meets periodically to discuss scientific aspects pertaining to biotech policy recommendations:

- ***The Institute for Research in Agriculture, Livestock and Forestry (IDIAF)***: This entity is supported by the GoDR. Its main objective is to conduct research in agriculture and forestry in the DR, and to validate those research results.
- ***The National Council for Research in Agriculture and Forestry (CONIAF)***: This Council is a ***decentralized*** entity that seeks to strengthen, stimulate, and guide research efforts within the realms of agriculture and forestry. It offers financing through research grants and works closely with both the public and private sectors.
- ***The Center for Agricultural and Forestry Development (CEDAF)***: This Center is a non-profit organization that promotes sustainable development of the agricultural, livestock, and forestry sectors through training, informational courses, and workshops, as well as conducting sectoral analysis for the purpose of defining strategic goals. Its primary focus is to render agriculture more competitive, decrease poverty levels, and protect the environment.
- ***The Institute for Biotechnology and Industry Innovation (IIBI)***: Backed by the GoDR, the IIBI promotes technological development to enhance the DR's trade competitiveness in areas such as biotechnology and capacity building. It also manages the Centre of Vegetable Biotechnology (CEBIVE) to produce high quality plants with pest and disease resistance and endurance from environmental factors. The CEBIVE has established propagation lines of production of several plant varieties, such as bananas, plantains, and orchids.

In addition to the institutions above, the commission also includes participation from three of the country's leading universities: 1) the Pedro Henriquez Ureña National University (UNPHU); 2) the Institute for Higher Learning in Agriculture (ISA); and, 3) the Autonomous University of Santo Domingo (UASD).

In June 2022, the Ministry of Environment hired an external firm to develop the regulation (s) needed to implement the [Law 219-15](#). This may bring requirement changes (ex. labeling) in the medium term. The World Trade Organization (WTO) recommends member countries allowing 60 days comment period on proposed requirement changes.

#### ***b) Approvals:***

There is no approval process for GE events. Therefore, there are no lists of crops that are approved or registered for import, export, or domestic cultivation. On instances where the IDIAF imported GE materials, the institution requested an exceptional permit to the Ministry of Agriculture. Following that request, the MoA sent a mission to the exporting country to determine the feasibility and develop a risk assessment of importing the material to the DR and subsequently approving or denying the imports.

**c) Stacked or pyramided event approvals:**

The GoDR does not require approval for stacked events.

**d) Field Testing:**

No domestic cultivation is allowed, including field testing.

**e) Innovative Biotechnologies:**

N/A

**f) Coexistence:**

In the DR, the coexistence between GE and non-GE crops is not regulated by the government, and current rules and regulations do not address this issue. The country is party to the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) between the EU and the CARIFORUM countries and exports large quantities of organic bananas, cocoa, and coffee to the European market.

**g) Labeling:**

The DR does not require GE ingredients or content to be labeled on processed products. The current labeling requirements are found in [RTD 53 \(NORDOM 53\)](#), which is formally a technical regulation, but has only been partially enforced since 2008. That regulation follows the Codex Stan 1-1985 and states that labeling should be in the Spanish language and meet other technical requirements but does not include any GE-specific requirements.

However, Article 33 of Law 219-15 on Biotechnology Security, approved in 2015 and described below, requires that “*all products that are derived from GMOs must be properly identified through labeling.*” However, since it is not reflected in RTD 53, and Law 219-15 does not have separate implementing regulations, this labeling requirement is currently not being enforced.

**h) Monitoring and Testing:**

The DR is not testing for GE content.

**i) Low Level Presence Policy (LLP):**

The DR has no LLP policy.

**j) Additional Regulatory Requirements:**

None.

**k) Intellectual Property Rights (IPR):**

N/A, no domestic commercial cultivation.

**l) Cartagena Protocol ratification:**

In 2006, the DR became a signatory to the Cartagena Biosafety Protocol, and the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources’ (MIMARENA) Biosafety and Forestry Directorate is the entity responsible for coordinating policy at the national level. MIMARENA is also responsible for drafting legislation and technical regulations regulating genetic resources and biosafety.



In 2015, the Dominican Congress approved [Law 219-15](#) on Biotechnology Security. The text creates a regulatory framework that encompasses national policy for biotechnology, an administrative and regulatory system for importing GE material, and a decision-making support system, coupled with a mechanism to facilitate social participation and consultation. The law calls for the creation of a National Commission for Biotechnology (CONABIO), formed by several ministries and private sector organizations, before beginning its implementation. CONABIO was created in 2017, but it has only met informally. Each institution that is part of the commission has responsibility for specific issues and is expected to assist in drafting norms and regulations to implement the law. For example, the Ministry of Commerce is responsible for drafting regulations related to labeling. To date implementing regulations have yet to be drafted. However, legislation aimed at implementing the Cartagena Protocol has the potential to adversely affect trade in products containing GE material, as labeling is contemplated in the proposed text.

The Dominican Congress also approved [Law 333-15](#) on Biodiversity in 2015. The law creates a regulatory framework to conserve and promote sustainable use of biodiversity. So far, the country has not made progress in its implementation.

Both of the 2015 laws described above were passed in response to the DR's signing of the [Nagoya Protocol](#). This protocol's stated objective is the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from the utilization of genetic resources, thereby contributing to the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity.

***m) International Treaties/Fora:***

GoDR officials from the Ministries of Environment and Agriculture participate in meetings of international standard-setting bodies when funding is available.

In November 2018, Argentina led an international effort during the World Trade Organization (WTO) Committee meeting on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (WTO-SPS) in Geneva, Switzerland to advance the "International Statement on Agricultural Applications of Precision Biotechnology. The statement reiterates high-level approaches regarding the fair, science-based treatment of precision biotechnology. The DR was signatory to this non-binding document.

In August 2019, the country participated in the open-ended working group on the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework celebrated in Nairobi, Kenya.

In 2021, the Ministry of Environment sent personnel to a training about Clustered Regularly Interspaced Short Palindromic Repeats (CRISPR) technique to Colombia to continue learning about modern biotechnology techniques.

***n) Related Issues:***

N/A.

**PART C: Marketing**

***a) Public/Private Opinions:***

GE crops and food are not controversial issues in the DR. No active opposition groups exist and there are no discernable positive or negative public attitudes regarding biotechnology.

**b) Market Acceptance Studies:**

N/A.

## CHAPTER 2: ANIMAL BIOTECHNOLOGY

### PART D: Production and Trade

**a) Research and Product Development:**

No GE animals are used for food production in the DR, and the country does not conduct any research on GE animals.

The Ministry of Agriculture created the Center of Biotechnology and Animal Reproduction (CEBIORA). CEBIORA's objective is to increase dairy and meat livestock yields through the production of embryos and artificial insemination. Nonetheless, due to the African Swine Fever outbreak, financial resources initially assigned to CEBIORA were repurposed for ASF and left the new center with limited resources for innovation.

**b) Commercial Production:** N/A

**c) Exports:** N/A

**d) Imports:** N/A

**e) Trade Barriers:** N/A

### PART E: Policy

**a) Regulatory Framework:** N/A

Animal biotechnology is not contemplated in the biosafety law.

**b) Approvals/Authorizations:** N/A

**c) Innovative Biotechnologies:** N/A

**d) Labeling and Traceability:** N/A

**e) Additional Regulatory Requirements:** N/A

**f) Intellectual Property Rights (IPR):** N/A

**g) International Treaties/Fora:** N/A

**h) Related Issues:** N/A

### PART F: Marketing

**a) Public/Private Opinions:** None. Not an issue of public debate or concern.

**b) Market Acceptance/Studies:** None.

## CHAPTER 3: MICROBIAL BIOTECHNOLOGY

### PART G: Production and Trade

**a) Commercial Production:** The DR does not commercially produce food ingredients derived from microbial biotechnology

**b) Exports:** The DR exports alcoholic beverages and processed products which may contain microbial biotech-derived food ingredients.

c) **Imports:** The only microbial biotech-derived food ingredients imported by the DR are those traditionally used in the production of alcoholic beverages, dairy products, and processed products. Likewise, the DR imports alcoholic beverages, dairy products, and processed products which may contain microbial biotech-derived food ingredients.

d) **Trade Barriers:** N/A

#### PART H: Policy

a) **Regulatory Framework:** N/A

b) **Approvals/Authorizations:** N/A

c) **Labeling and Traceability:** N/A

d) **Monitoring and Testing:** N/A

e) **Additional Regulatory Requirements:** N/A

f) **Intellectual Property Rights (IPR):** N/A

g) **Related Issues:** N/A

#### PART I: Marketing

a) **Public/Private Opinions:** None.

b) **Market Acceptance/Studies:** None.

**Attachments:**

No Attachments