

**Required Report:** Required - Public Distribution

**Date:** November 04, 2024

**Report Number:** DR2024-0016

**Report Name:** Agricultural Biotechnology Annual

**Country:** Dominican Republic

**Post:** Santo Domingo

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

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**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 \$2 billion in 2023. 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 remains unenforced due to lack of regulatory oversight and is not expected to be implemented in the short term.

**Executive Summary:**

The Dominican Republic (DR) is a significant market for U.S. feed grains, oilseeds, and processed food products. Although the DR has ratified the Cartagena Protocol and enacted a [2015 law](#), aimed at restricting the importation of genetically engineered (GE) products, the Government of the Dominican Republic (GoDR) has not actively pursued these restrictions and has shown no indication that it intends to do so.

Currently, the DR does not produce any GE crops or animals, nor are any such products currently under development. However, in recent years, the DR has successfully reproduced over a dozen conventionally bred crops that have been successfully reproduced in the DR through low-tech tissue culture techniques. This approach has played a vital role in enhancing the resilience of crops, such as plantains and bananas against pests and diseases. Furthermore, there is no utilization of microorganisms for the production of commercially viable products in the country.

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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) initiated the development of banana plants resistant to black sigatoka (*Mycosphaerella fijiensis*). IDIAF created genetically engineered materials with training obtained from the Research Center and Advanced Studies (CINVESTAV) in Mexico and conducted experimental trials in its laboratories. However, IDIAF did not advance these developments to field trials due to the absence of a regulatory framework and mitigation protocols in the country.

#### *b) Commercial production:*

There is currently no biotechnology production in the Dominican Republic, and the country does not intend to pursue it at this time. Several years ago, mid-sized local corn producers from the northern region publicly urged the Government to approve the use of genetically engineered (GE) products to address the competitive challenges posed by large-scale corn imports. Similar requests have been reiterated periodically. Local producers have questioned the “inflexible” stance of the Dominican Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) regarding the prohibition of corn seeds and other GE products that could enhance productivity. Despite government efforts over the past two years to boost local corn production in response to rising global prices, its position on the importation of GE corn seeds remains unchanged.

#### *c) Exports:*

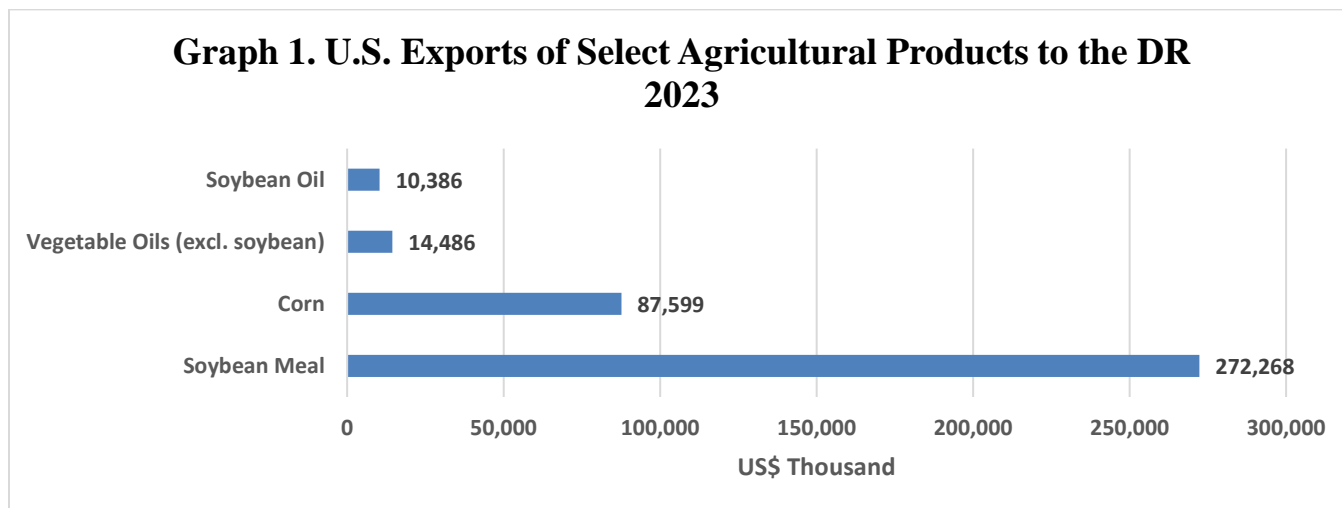
N/A

#### *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 prevalent. Therefore, the poultry and swine industries rely heavily on GE feed inputs for livestock development and finishing. Additionally, the DR’s food processing industry continues to significantly rely on U.S. soybeans and other oilseeds, as well as U.S. corn, to meet its needs.

Currently, there are no specific import requirements related to GE products being enforced. In the past, the GoDR mandated that phytosanitary certificates accompanying corn shipments indicate that the product “does not contain GMO material.” However, this requirement was only briefly enforced in 2015, when the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) halted two U.S. corn shipments, demanding certification that the product “does not contain GMO material.” Following complaints from private sector, the MoA allowed the entry of the shipments and committed to eliminating this requirement from the general corn import regulations. This requirement was formally removed later in 2015.

At this time, FAS Santo Domingo is unaware of any efforts by the GoDR, private importers, or non-government organizations (NGOs) to actively exclude GE products. Despite a 2015 law that explicitly mandates the labeling of GE products, potentially affecting the importation of GE raw materials, the law has not progressed toward implementation and is not expected to do so in the short term (please refer to the section on labeling in Chapter 1, Part B, section g.). The following graph illustrates export values for select U.S. agricultural products to the Dominican market during calendar year 2023:



Source: Built by FAS Santo Domingo with data from GATS/USDA.

**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. In 2011, through the Food for Progress (FFPr) Program, the DR received a donation of 13,400 metric tons of soybean meal, which was monetized in the country to support a bi-national program with Haiti. Additionally, 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 within the country. 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 previously noted, the DR had established rules requiring phytosanitary certificates for corn shipments to indicate that the product “does not contain GMO material.” However, this requirement was removed in 2015, and the country continues to import substantial volumes of corn from both U.S. and South American sources, typically exceeding 1.5 million metric tons annually.

## PART B: Policy

### a) Regulatory framework:

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

Legal term (in official language)	Legal term (in English)	Laws and regulations where term is used	Legal definition (in English)
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 MoA, and the Ministry of Public Health (MSP) collaborate on the development and implementation of the national biotech policy. For instance, the MoA, specifically its Plant Health Department, is responsible for regulating and ensuring the safe entry of plant products into the country. This department also works in conjunction with the MSP on health-related issues concerning genetically engineered (GE) materials.

Several other public sector entities form a commission that meets periodically to discuss scientific aspects related to biotech policy recommendations:

- ***IDIAF***: Supported by the GoDR, IDIAF's primary 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 decentralized entity aims to strengthen, stimulate, and guide research efforts within agriculture and forestry. It provides financing through small research grants and collaborates closely with both the public and private sectors.
- ***The Center for Agricultural and Forestry Development (CEDAF)***: This center is a non-profit organization dedicated to promoting the sustainable development of the agricultural, livestock, and forestry sectors. It achieves this through training programs, informational courses, and workshops, as well as conducting sectoral analyses to define strategic goals. The Center's primary focus is to enhance agricultural competitiveness, reduce poverty levels, and protect the environment.
- ***The Institute for Biotechnology and Industry Innovation (IIBI)***: Supported by the GoDR, the IIBI promotes technological development to enhance the country's trade competitiveness in areas such as biotechnology and capacity building. It also manages the Centre of Vegetable Biotechnology (CEBIVE), which focuses on producing high-quality plants with resistance to pests, diseases, and environmental stressors. CEBIVE has established propagation lines for several plant varieties, including bananas, plantains, and orchids.

In addition to the aforementioned institutions, the commission also includes participation from three of the country's leading universities: 1) 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 [Law 219-15](#). This may result in requirement changes, such as labeling, in the medium term. The World Trade Organization (WTO) recommends that member countries allow a 60-day comment period on proposed requirement changes.

***b) Approvals:***

There is no approval process for GE events in the Dominican Republic. Consequently, there are no lists of crops approved or registered for import, export, or domestic cultivation. In instances where the IDIAF imported GE materials, the institution requested an exception permit from the Ministry of Agriculture. Following this request, the MoA dispatched a mission to the exporting country to assess the feasibility and conduct a risk assessment of importing the material to the DR, ultimately deciding whether to approve or deny 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, there is currently no government regulation regarding the coexistence of genetically engineered (GE) and non-GE crops. Existing rules do not address this issue, despite the country being a party to the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) between the EU and CARIFORUM nations. As a result, the DR exports substantial quantities of organic bananas, cocoa, and coffee to the European market.

***g) Labeling and traceability:***

The DR does not mandate the labeling of GE ingredients or content in processed products. Current labeling requirements, outlined in [RTD 53 \(NORDOM 53\)](#), which is a technical regulation, have only been partially enforced since 2008. The regulation follows the Codex Stan 1-1985 stating that labeling should be in the Spanish language and meet other technical requirements but does not include any GE-specific requirements.

Although Article 33 of Law 219-15 on Biotechnology Security, approved in 2015, stipulates “*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. There is no domestic commercial cultivation.

***l) Cartagena Protocol ratification:***

The DR became a signatory to the Cartagena Biosafety Protocol in 2006, and the Biosafety and Forestry Directorate of MIMARENA is responsible for coordinating national policy. 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, establishing 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 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/Forums:***

GoDR officials from the Ministries of Environment and Agriculture participate in international standard-setting meetings when funding allows. In November 2018, the DR signed the non-binding "International Statement on Agricultural Applications of Precision Biotechnology" during a WTO-SPS Committee meeting in Geneva, which promotes science-based treatment of precision biotechnology.

The country also participated in discussions on the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework in Nairobi, Kenya, in August 2019.

In 2021, personnel from the Ministry of Environment attended training on the CRISPR technique in Colombia.

In 2023, a delegation from the Dominican Republic led by the Minister of Environment and Natural Resources, participated in the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP 28).

***n) Related Issues:***

N/A.

**PART C: Marketing**

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

GE crops and food are not considered controversial issues in the DR. There are no active opposition groups, and public attitudes toward biotechnology are largely neutral, with no significant discernible positive or negative sentiments.

***b) Market Acceptance Studies:***

N/A

## CHAPTER 2: ANIMAL BIOTECHNOLOGY

### **PART D: Production and Trade**

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

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

The Ministry of Agriculture established the Center of Biotechnology and Animal Reproduction (CEBIORA) with the intention of enhancing dairy and meat livestock yields through embryo production and artificial insemination. However, due to the outbreak of African Swine Fever, financial resources initially allocated to CEBIORA were redirected to address ASF, resulting in limited resources for innovation at the center.

#### ***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 that may contain food ingredients derived from microbial biotechnology.

*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