

THIS REPORT CONTAINS ASSESSMENTS OF COMMODITY AND TRADE ISSUES MADE BY  
USDA STAFF AND NOT NECESSARILY STATEMENTS OF OFFICIAL U.S. GOVERNMENT  
POLICY

Required Report - public distribution

**Date:** 11/20/2017

**GAIN Report Number:** DR1711

## **Dominican Republic**

### **Agricultural Biotechnology Annual 2017**

**Approved By:**

Lisa Ahramjian, Agricultural Attaché

**Prepared By:**

Virgilio Mayol, Agricultural Specialist

**Report Highlights:**

The Dominican Republic continues to be a strong market for U.S. bulk agricultural products (corn), intermediate goods (soybean meal), and high value consumer-oriented products (processed food products), reaching a total value of US\$1.1 billion in 2016. Despite 2015 legislation that explicitly states the need for mandatory labeling of genetically engineered (GE) products and could potentially affect the importation of GE raw materials, the legislation has yet to advance along the path to implementation.

## **Section I. Executive summary**

The Dominican Republic 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 legislation would restrict the importation 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 crops have been reproduced in the DR via low-tech tissue culture, thereby contributing significantly to specific areas of Dominican agricultural production.

## **Section II. Plant and Animal Biotechnology**

### **CHAPTER 1: PLANT BIOTECHNOLOGY**

#### ***PART A: Production and trade***

##### ***a) Product development:***

N/A

##### ***b) Commercial production:***

There is no biotech production in the Dominican Republic (DR), and the country does not plan to pursue it at this time. During 2014, mid-size 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 genetically engineered products that could help increase their productivity. However, the Government has not shifted its position in this matter.

##### ***c) Exports:***

N/A

##### ***d) Imports:***

The supply of almost all coarse grains and soybean products in the DR originate in the United States, Brazil, Argentina, and other markets where GE strains 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. soybean, corn, and other oil 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.” This requirement was not enforced except for a brief episode 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 from the requested requirements.

At this time, Post is not aware of any efforts by either the GoDR, private importers, or NGO’s to actively exclude GE products, although this requirement is again included in recent legislation from the Ministry of Environment (please see below section on labeling).

The following table captures export values for selected U.S. agricultural products into the Dominican market during Calendar Year 2016 (CY 2016):

**Export values of selected agricultural products to the Dominican Republic, CY 2016**

<b>Product</b>	<b>Export value (in thousands of US\$)</b>
Soybean meal	223,800
Soybean oil	84,230
Corn	87,208
Other vegetable oils	17,581
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>412,819</b>

*Source: 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. During 2011, through the Food for Progress (FFP) Program, the country received a donation of 13,400 MT of soybean meal to carry out a Bi-national Program along with Haiti. Also in 2015 and 2017, the country received donations of soybean meal, soybean oil, yellow grease, and tallow for two FFP Programs to be implemented in 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 described above, the Dominican Republic 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 million metric tons annually).

**PART B: Policy**

*a) Regulatory framework:*

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, and its main objective is to conduct research in agriculture and forestry in the DR, and also 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)***: this entity is backed by the GoDR and promotes technological development in areas such as biotechnology and capacity building, in order to enhance the country's competitiveness in international trade. 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, orchids, etc. The Centre has also characterized several local plant varieties.

In addition to the institutions above, the commission also includes participation from three of the country's leading universities, namely: 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).

*b) Approvals:*

There are no lists of approved/registered plants/crops for import, export, or domestic cultivation.

*c) Stacked or pyramided event approvals:*

The Government of the Dominican Republic does not require additional approval for stacked events.

*d) Field Testing:*

No domestic cultivation is allowed, including field testing.

*e) Innovative Biotechnologies:*

N/A

*f) Coexistence:*

In the Dominican Republic, 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 Dominican Republic does not require GE ingredients or content 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 the Law 219-15 of 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:*

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 Dominican Republic became a signatory to the Cartagena Biosafety Protocol and the MIMARENA’s 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 of Biotechnology Security<sup>1</sup>. 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. The Commission has yet to be created nor has MIMARENA drafted the expected norms and regulations for its implementation.

On its face, this legislation, aimed at implementing the Cartagena Protocol, has the potential to adversely affect trade in products comprised of GE material, given that the issue of labeling is contemplated in the proposed text.

The Senate also approved Law 333-15 of Biodiversity<sup>2</sup>. The text creates a regulatory framework to conserve and promote sustainable use of the biodiversity.

The Dominican Republic is also a signee of the Nagoya Protocol, which reinforces the interest of MIMARENA in advancing the implementation of the above mentioned laws.

*m) International treaties/Fora:*

GoDR officials from the Ministries of Environment and Agriculture participate in international standard setting bodies when funding is available. However, funding has not been available in the last two years and initiatives on the subject from International organizations have been limited.

*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 public attitudes one way or another.

*b) Market Acceptance Studies:*

N/A.

---

<sup>1</sup> Please see the text of the law at: [www.extwprlegs1.fao.org/docs/pdf/dom163723.pdf](http://www.extwprlegs1.fao.org/docs/pdf/dom163723.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Please see the text of the law at: [www.cbd.int/abs/submissions/Aichi16/Dominicanrepublic-law333-15-en.pdf](http://www.cbd.int/abs/submissions/Aichi16/Dominicanrepublic-law333-15-en.pdf)

## **CHAPTER 2: ANIMAL BIOTECHNOLOGY**

There are no GE animals for food production in the DR, and the country is not conducting research on them. In addition, animal biotechnology is not contemplated in the biosafety law.

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

a) Product Development: N/A

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

b) Innovative Biotechnologies: N/A

c) Labeling and Traceability: N/A

d) Intellectual Property Rights (IPR): N/A

e) International Treaties/Fora: N/A

f) 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.