Agriculture

• China Emerging as a World Leader in Transgenic Research p.206
Emphasizing its strong commitment to biotech research, China has rapidly become one of the world leaders in terms of achievements in the research fields of transgenic insect-resistant cotton, transgenic rice and gene engineering vaccines.

At the 7th APEC Seminar on Agricultural Biological Technology and Biological Safety held in Beijing, the Chinese government revealed that it already had over 130 transgenic species, involving more than a hundred kinds of genes that are under research. The Chinese Ministry of Agriculture addressed the issue of biotechnology by stating that China attaches great importance to its influence on the eco-environment and human health.

Last year, China became a leading transgenic planting country — following the US, Canada, Brazil and Argentina — with a total cultivation area exceeding 2.1 million hectares for transgenic crops.

Between 1997 and September 2003, the Chinese Ministry of Agriculture has approved over ten kinds of transgenic plants such as rice, corn, cotton, soybean, rape and potato to be released in farm. Genetically engineered plants including transgenic cotton, tomato and pimiento and microorganism gene engineering vaccines for animals are carried successfully into commercial production.

China has also been consistent in updating the safety management of gene engineering. Dating back to as early as 1993, the Chinese government had already started publishing laws and regulations relevant to how gene engineering should ideally be monitored by the authorities.

The “Rules on Safety Management of Agricultural Transgenic Plants”, issued by the State Council in 2001, got the Ministry of Agriculture involved in three associated regulations on safety assessment, import and export and symbol, that was released early last year for comprehensive management of the research, experiment, production, processing, operation and import and export of agricultural transgenic crops.