

Philippines Supreme Court Blocks Commercial Release of GMOs over Ecological Disaster Fears

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by [Sustainable Pulse](#)

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Genetically modified Golden Rice and Bt eggplant will remain off the market in the Philippines after the country's Supreme Court (SC) issued a writ in favor of farmers and scientists who sought to stop the government from commercially releasing the products, Phil Star Global [reported](#). In a session last Tuesday, the SC granted a writ of Kalikasan to MASIPAG and other petitioners against officials of the Departments of Agriculture (DA), Environment and Natural Resources, and Health as well as the Bureau of Plant Industry, Philippine Rice Research Institute and University of the Philippines-Los Baños.

The writ of Kalikasan, a judicial mechanism in the Philippines, provides protection against ecological damage and disasters caused by human activities like mining.

The petitioners sought the issuance of the writ alongside a continuing mandamus before the SC last year for a temporary environmental protection order that mandates the DA to stop the commercial propagation of golden rice and issue biosafety permits for the commercial propagation of Bt Eggplant.

The SC has yet to disclose whether they also granted other requests in the petition including stopping the DA from commercially propagating the Golden Rice and the Bt Eggplant until proof of safety and compliance with legal requirements are presented.

The petitioners want all biosafety permits for Golden Rice and Bt Eggplant nullified and voided. They also sought independent risk and impact assessments, to secure prior and informed consent of farmers and indigenous peoples and to ensure liability mechanisms in case of damage as required by law.

While the SC has yet to release the full decision, a briefer on the case showed that the MASIPAG argued that the Golden Rice, which is patented to transnational agrochemical corporation Syngenta, is a rice variety that has been modified by inserting genes from maize and bacteria found in soil. The bacteria allows the plant to biosynthesize beta-carotene in the edible parts.

“They also argued that Bt Eggplant was designed so the plant would produce its own toxin to kill the fruit and shoot borer, which is one of several common pests that consume and damage eggplants,” the briefer added.

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