

Viewing cable 08BOGOTA971, COLOMBIA INCREASES TRANSGENIC CROP CULTIVATION

If you are new to these pages, please read an introduction on the [structure of a cable](#) as well as how to [discuss them](#) with others. See also the [FAQs](#)

Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification	Origin
08BOGOTA971	2008-03-12 18:00	2011-08-30 01:44	UNCLASSIFIED//FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY	Embassy Bogota

VZCZCXYZ0031
RR RUEHWEB

DE RUEHBO #0971 0721800
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 121800Z MAR 08
FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 1892
INFO RUEHAC/AMEMBASSY ASUNCION 0516
RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA 8095
RUEHBU/AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES 2134
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS 0102
RUEHPE/AMEMBASSY LIMA 6005
RUEHZP/AMEMBASSY PANAMA 1390
RUEHQT/AMEMBASSY QUITO 6664

UNCLAS BOGOTA 000971

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [EAGR](#) [ECON](#) [SENV](#) [TBIO](#) [CO](#)

SUBJECT: COLOMBIA INCREASES TRANSGENIC CROP CULTIVATION

¶1. (U) SUMMARY: Colombia's planting of Genetically Modified (GM), or transgenic, crops, while small compared to some other countries in the region, grew by 23 percent in ¶2007. Experts believe the increase demonstrates that Colombia does not oppose GM agriculture, and told us that local development of GM agricultural products would further build public support. END SUMMARY

Plantings Up But Still Dwarfed By Other Countries in Region

¶2. (U) Colombia's cultivation of transgenics grew from 22,400 hectares to 27,700 hectares in 2007. Colombian GM planting ranked fourteenth worldwide in 2007, with Colombia's growth rate double the worldwide average of 12 percent. Osiris Ocando, Executive Director of Agro-Bio, a non-profit organization that promotes the use of GM agriculture in Colombia, lauded the growth. However, she noted that Colombia will not catch up with leading countries in the

region anytime soon. She pointed out that according to a recent study by the International Service for the Acquisition of Agri-Biotech Applications, in 2007 Argentina had over 19 million hectares of GM agriculture under production, Brazil had 15 million hectares, and Paraguay had over 2.5 million hectares.

¶3. (U) GM corn, which the Colombian Institute of Agriculture only approved for use in early 2007, accounted for all the new planting. GM cotton, which constitutes 80 percent of Colombia's GM cultivation, actually declined slightly in 2007. Manuel Guillermo Rico, Executive Director of CropLife Latin America, explained that Colombia's overall cotton cultivation declined in 2007 due to market factors unrelated to GM. However, Rico expects cotton cultivation, including GM cotton, to bounce back in 2008.

Planting Increase Symbolically Important

¶4. (SBU) Rafael Mejia, head of the Sociedad de Agricultores de Colombia (SAC), an umbrella association of all agricultural producers, said Colombia needs transgenics to compete in international markets. Mejia said obtaining governmental approval for transgenics has not been easy, particularly given opposition from the Ministry of the Environment, Housing and Territorial Development. Mejia called the increase an important sign to the international business community that Colombia does not reject GM agriculture.

¶5. (U) German Velez, Executive Director of Grupo Semillas, a Colombian NGO opposed to transgenics, called the increase "bad news" for small farmers. Velez expressed particular concern over the dramatic growth of GM corn which he worried will cross-pollinate with non-GM corn. Velez said the benefits of GM accrue mainly to large agricultural companies and multinational firms.

Local Support for GM Agriculture Growing

¶6. (U) Nevertheless, Ana Maria Frieri, an attorney in private practice who works with GM agricultural producers, expressed optimism over the future of transgenics in Colombia. She said that GM production of cassava, rice, roses, sugarcane and coffee will likely start in the near future. Frieri noted that local agriculture companies recently began filing for GM patents, and expects public support for transgenics to increase once the public sees it as "coming from Juan Valdez instead of Monsanto." Brownfield