

Suspension of Golden Rice and Bt Talong amounts to “weaponization of law”, says Philippines’ top scientific body

National Academy of Science and Technology warns Court of Appeals’ decision to withdraw permit for Golden Rice and Bt Talong risks doing more harm than good.

TAGUIG CITY, PHILIPPINES, April 29, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/ -- A court decision to suspend the



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NAST Agricultural Sciences Division

production of vitamin A-enriched Golden Rice and pest-resistant Bt Talong in the Philippines amounts to the “weaponization of the law”, according to the government’s scientific advisory body.

Members of the National Academy of Science and Technology (NAST) Agricultural Sciences Division said the Court of Appeals’ decision favored “an extreme ideology about nature” after siding with Greenpeace and other

activists to block the genetically modified crops.

The scientists cited decades of international research and development behind both Golden Rice and Bt Talong, a pest-resistant variety of eggplant, and the widespread use of similar products in 29 countries around the world.

“Bt Talong is a product of a technology whose proof-of-concept dates back to the 1980s and was first used commercially in 1996 in the USA,” said the statement signed by Prof. Eufemio T. Rasco, Jr, Chair of the NAST Agricultural Sciences Division, along with several NAST members.

“Golden Rice, on the other hand, is based on the same concept; its development dates back to the late 1990s through the work of European scientists. They were developed locally by the University of the Philippines Los Baños and PhilRice, respectively, both of which are public institutions with a proven track record of service to the Filipino people.”

The signatories, which include two national scientists, said the issues raised against Golden Rice had previously been dismissed by the Department of Agriculture and debunked by close to 130 Nobel Prize Laureates and millions of farmers.

Meanwhile, evidence indicates Golden Rice can help reduce vitamin A deficiency, a form of malnutrition affecting more than [15 percent](#) of children under six in the Philippines.

“The court decision amounts to weaponization of the law to favor an extreme ideology about nature; that a pristine environment must be preserved, and modern biological technology is working against this goal,” the statement said.

“Science can make predictions about potential harm and formulate mitigation and remedial measures. These are precisely the measures incorporated in the regulatory system that approved the introduction of Bt Talong and Golden Rice.

“The Philippine system is compliant with international standards that have been used for more than a quarter of a century and have been proven by practice to be reliable.”

The scientists warned that the court’s decision would delay the use of the improved crops, which would ultimately cause more harm than good.

“As we try to placate the minority which is ideologically against these modern technologies, who will be satisfied only if these technologies are kept away permanently from farmers and consumers, millions die and more suffer from the harmful effects of technologies they seek to replace.”

The Department of Agriculture’s PhilRice is understood to be examining potential recourses to challenge the decision. Meanwhile, the University of the Philippines Los Baños is also coordinating with its lawyers on the proper course of action.

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