

Japan suspends sale of Canadian wheat after GMO wheat found in Alberta

Written by Joan Russow
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by Yuka Obayashi, Rod Nickel

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TOKYO/WINNIPEG, Manitoba (Reuters) - Japan's farm ministry said on Friday it has suspended its tender and sale of wheat from Canada after grain containing a genetically modified trait was discovered last summer in Canada's Alberta province.

The Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) said on Thursday the wheat containing a genetically modified trait, developed by Monsanto Co (BAYGn.DE) to tolerate the Roundup weed-killer, was discovered in Alberta.

"We are suspending the tender and sale of Canadian wheat until we confirm that the Canadian wheat that Japan buys contains no GMO," an official at the Japanese farm ministry said.

Canada is one of the world's largest wheat exporters. While other crops such as corn and soybeans have been widely genetically modified to improve yield or withstand threats, GMO wheat has not been approved anywhere for commercial production because of consumers' concerns.

The wheat, discovered near a rural road after it survived herbicide spraying, has not been approved for commercial use.

Officials with Japan's ministry of agriculture, forestry and fisheries are scheduled to visit Canada next week to seek more information, said Cam Dahl, president of industry group Cereals Canada, whose members include Cargill Ltd [CARGIL.UL] and Richardson International.

He said he is concerned that South Korea and China may be next to suspend Canadian wheat

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imports.

Bayer AG

100.08

BAYGN.DEXETRA

-0.72(-0.71%)

BAYGn.DE

BAYGn.DE

In 2016, Japan and South Korea temporarily suspended U.S. wheat imports after a similar GMO wheat finding.

Losing Japanese buyers, who pay a premium for high-quality, high-protein wheat, hurts Canada and creates opportunities for U.S. and Australian wheat exporters, Dahl said.

Japan's move also leaves an undetermined volume of Canadian wheat already loaded on vessels needing to find a new market, possibly at bargain rates to Indonesia or Bangladesh, Dahl said.

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