



PRESS RELEASE

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Golden Rice Research Publication Retracted Due To Ethical Grounds

Los Baños, Laguna - Farmer-scientist group laud the retraction of the nutritional study on Golden Rice by the American Journal of Clinical Nutrition (AJCN). The article “*B-Carotene in Golden Rice is as good as B-Carotene in oil in providing Vitamin A to children*” was published in the September 2012 issue of the American Journal of Clinical Nutrition. The Massachusetts Superior Court denied the senior author, Dr Guangwen Tang, appeal to stop the retraction. According to the AJCN, on July 17, 2015, the court decided to clear the way for the American Society of Nutrition (ASN), the copyright owner of the journal, to retract. ASN then retracted the said article on July 29, 2015.

The court based its decision on moral and ethical grounds, saying that there was insufficient information given to the Chinese school-age children, and their parents/guardians, who underwent Golden Rice feed testing. Dr Tang, a researcher based in Tufts University, headed a team of scientists to conduct nutritional study on Golden Rice on children in Hunan province in China.



“This is a welcome development to those who oppose the golden rice. The farmers feel vindicated that they uprooted the Golden Rice field trial in August 2013. They are strongly against the field trial of the said crop as it might affect their crops, health and environment. With this retraction no nutritional or safety studies exist that supports the benefits of Golden Rice” said Dr Chito Medina, national coordinator of MASIPAG.

Tomorrow, August 8, marks the second year when about 400 farmers and basic sectors from SIKWAL-GMO trooped at the Golden Rice field trials inside the regional office of the Department of Agriculture in Pili, Camarines Sur and uprooted the said GM crop. Also last year, more than 20 organizations and regional groups from all over Asia convened to form the STOP Golden Rice! Alliance. They also protested in front of the Department of Agriculture to stop the impending commercialization of Golden Rice.

Golden Rice, a transgenic rice containing *beta carotene* is being heralded as *the* solution to Vitamin A deficiency (VAD). At present, it has completed the multi-location field trials in the Philippines and is now in the process of collating the data for regulatory approval. After the regulatory approval, feed testing on the people will commence. The International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) and the Philippine Rice

Research Institute (PhilRice) of the Department of Agriculture are the proponents of the said project. But of course, the force behind this is the owner of Golden Rice, Syngenta, and other biotech corporations. They push to commercialize Golden Rice by 2016 or earlier. In fact, a group of lobbyist, headed by Patrick Moore, had a campaign swing here in the Philippines, Bangladesh and India last March. Apart from the Philippines, Golden Rice is also being field tested in contained areas in Indonesia and Bangladesh.

Moral and Ethical grounds

The AJCN, stated several reasons for retracting the article. The authors were unable to provide sufficient evidence that the study has been reviewed by local ethics committee in China. Also they were unable to prove that all parents and children involved in the study were provided with the full consent form for the study.

Tufts University also made a separate investigation about the incident, and concluded that Dr Tang had ethical shortcomings. She was banned from conducting human research for two years. She will also be supervised in future research.

Aside from these issues, opponents also pointed out that the research was done using meals that are high in fat that would favor positive results of the experiment. The meals were supplemented with 10g butter, 100g of pork meat and egg. Vitamin A needs fat for it to be effectively absorbed by the body. Opponents say that this is not consistent with reality wherein poor families are unable to buy balanced diet.

“We believe that the Golden Rice feed testing in children is rigged to support its claims in eradicating Vitamin A deficiency. As the court has stated, the researchers has cut corners to hasten the commercialization of the product. They have also done the study in secret; no one was informed that a nutritional study was being conducted to children. We suspect that this same research will also be done to Filipino children, as they are fast tracking the commercialization of Golden Rice in the country. We need to be vigilant” added Dr Medina.

In the Philippines, continuous opposition by farmers and the proponents’ failure to increase the yield of Golden Rice have set back the commercialization of the said GM crop for one to two years. More and more communities, municipalities and cities are also putting in place ordinances against the planting of GM crops in their areas. Also farmers have been setting up boycott campaigns such as putting up “GMO Free Farms” signages in their fields to inform farmers to stay away from GM crops.###

MASIPAG is a network of farmers’ groups, scientist and non-government organizations in the Philippines seeking to improve the farmers’ quality of life through their control over genetic resources, agricultural technology and associated knowledge.

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