

# China's GM debate heats up

Two of China's most powerful government institutions went head to head in the controversial genetically modified (GM) food debate. Prompted by Peng Guangqian, a general from the People's Liberation Army writing a column in China's Global Times suggesting the GMO's is a strategy by the West to displace China's food security.



According to the Wall Street Journal China, Peng, who is also deputy secretary-general of China's National Security Policy Committee, said in his column "If things change and the West cuts off our grain supply, are 1.3 billion people going to drink the northwestern wind?"

The Ministry of Agriculture, which has authority over GMO policy, reacted by posting a question and answer transcript and rejected Peng's claims. Mr Lin Min, director of the Biotechnology Research Institute of the Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences, pointed out the US is the world's largest consumer of GMO crops and that as China faces rising strains on its arable land, its use of "foreign resources and market coordination are inevitable."

"This conspiracy theory is a product of Cold War thinking," Lin said, "Government-approved GMO food and non-GMO food are equally safe...If GMO research has any benefit, it is first and foremost in the national interest."

As the individual wealth of the Chinese people increases so does the demand on food. And the ministry have more and more turned to GMO imports to top up domestic supplies. In June, Beijing added import permits for three kinds of GMO soybeans produced by US giant Monsanto and German chemical producer BASF. In August this year, the government approved the first large-scale shipment of GMO corn from Argentina. The ministry has issued permits for every stage of domestic GMO development of China's major crops except commercial production.

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