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Preventing hidden commercialisation of GM foods



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A recent discussion on the regulation of the implantation of transgenic or genetically modified crops in the country makes it pertinent to mention a decision issued by the Office for the Defense of Competition (INDECOPI) in 2010 that can be used to prevent hidden commercialisation of these products.

This resolution stated that food prepared from transgenic products must contain this information on its label, whether or not there is proof that the products are harmful to health.

Genetically modified (GM) foods are foods derived from genetically modified organisms. Genetically modified organisms have had specific changes introduced into their DNA by genetic engineering techniques. These techniques are much more precise than mutagenesis (mutation breeding), where an organism is exposed to radiation or chemicals to create a non-specific but stable change. GM foods were first put on the market in the early 1990s. Typically, genetically modified foods are transgenic plant products: soybean, corn, canola and cotton seed oil.

Discussion on the harm of these foods to health arises because the use of biotechnology in the production of consumables marks an important difference from conventional or organic production methods.

INDECOPI concluded that the topic under discussion was not the right of consumers to understand the current or remote risk of consuming the food, but their right to the knowledge of the transgenic production methods.

We believe that the right of information should go beyond outlining the quality of GM food supplies, because many people do not know the real difference between a transgenic consumable and another that is not. Such information should also warn about the possibility that GM food may produce adverse health effects in the future.

These products may not in fact produce any negative effects in the short, medium or long term, but it could happen that these effects occur. Not informing consumers about this possibility is an unacceptable omission, because lack of information may have an important influence on the consumer's decision.

However, the requirement for some information is a good starting point. With increasing information about the possibilities of negative effects of GM foods, many consumers may make a more informed choice about whether to purchase products containing these consumables.