Mexico has made progress in its regulatory system since the country initiated field trials of GM crops (tomato) in 1996. Currently, most of the 200,000 ha/year grown with GM crops are dedicated for GM cotton, GM soybean and recently, GM maize has been permitted for pre-commercial phase, following a regulatory process supported by a relatively new legislation. Since the establishment of a de facto moratorium on GM maize field releases in 1998—on the grounds of protecting the crop’s native agro-diversity which impaired local R&D but not imports from GM-producing countries—a long legislative process finished with the publication of the Biosafety Law for GMOs in 2005; the By-law of 2008 contains specific requirements of information, procedures and authorities involved in granting field release permits and food safety clearances. The regulatory path to obtain a commercial status for planting of GM crops, require i) experimental phase trials (small scale, efficacy, agronomic equivalency, NTO studies, etc.), and ii) pilot phase or pre-commercial (medium-large scale, cost-benefit analysis). An important regulatory addendum called ‘Special Protection Regime for Maize’ of 2009 imposes a set of operative conditions on the nature of events and for field releases of GM maize in its centers of origin and largest diversity.

After two years of experimental field trials in 7 northern states with several GM maize events (with single and stacked insect resistance and herbicide tolerance traits) from Dow, Monsanto, Pioneer and Syngenta, the pre-commercial (pilot) phase field trials began in 2012 in Sinaloa and Tamaulipas. Researchers from universities and R&D institutions are in charge of field releases and assessments.

Results will be discussed focusing on biosafety measures towards coexistence between different maize cropping systems in Mexico.

*AgroBIO México is the local association of companies involved in the development and commercialization of agro-biotechnological applications, particularly, GM crops. www.agrobiomexico.org.mx

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