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**Mexico to invest \$1.4 million to certify labs to monitor for GMO content in crops, goods**

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*MEXICO CITY - Mexico's environment minister June 14 said the country will invest 15.4 million pesos (\$1.4 million) in institutions for researching and monitoring genetically modified organisms (GMOs).*

Environment Minister Alberto Cárdenas told a news conference that \$332,393 had been set aside to obtain "international certification" for government labs that monitor for GMOs in shipments and in the environment.

Cárdenas said the investment is among the measures being taken in response to a report issued by a North American Free Trade Agreement commission set up after GM corn was found growing in Mexico despite a ban on its cultivation.

Juan Elvira, deputy minister for environmental regulation, said Mexico wanted to have the capacity and the international certification so that test results would not be questioned.

In addition, according to Cárdenas, \$627,853 will be spent on capacity building to implement the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety, and another \$461,657 will be spent on studying native species of Mexican corn to create a database to aid in making policy decisions over the possible legalization of GM corn crops in Mexico, where corn is indigenous.

Cárdenas said the projects would spur further action "that will help us bring down to Earth our international obligations that Mexico acquired under the Cartagena Protocol [on Biosafety]," a treaty under the U.N. Convention on Biological Diversity that regulates international trade in living modified organisms.

Mexico's recently approved Law on Biosafety for Genetically Modified Organisms took effect on May 4 and establishes approval procedures for the planting of GM crops on a case-by-case basis in three successive stages: experimental projects, pilot projects, and commercial projects.

An environment ministry official said no applications had been submitted since the law took effect. However, Cárdenas said the government is evaluating several prior requests from research institutions for experimental projects with GM corn.

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