

# U.S. rice contaminated, government says

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Some long-grain rice in the United States has been contaminated with a genetically engineered variety not approved for human consumption, the government says.

"Based upon the information we have seen," the contaminated rice "is safe," Agriculture Secretary Mike Johanns said, adding he did not know where the contaminated rice was found or how widespread it was in the U.S. food supply.

The rice, known as LLRICE 601, was engineered by Bayer CropScience of Monheim, Germany, to make it resistant to a weed killer made by the agricultural giant Aventis, the Washington Post reported Saturday.

Bayer never got LLRICE 601 approved for U.S. marketing, but two other varieties of rice with the same gene were approved, so 601 is probably safe too, Johanns said.

Bayer said it was "cooperating closely" with the government in the investigation.

Johanns acknowledged the discovery could hurt rice sales -- especially exports, which are worth close to \$1 billion a year.

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