

## Philippines approves commercial cultivation of Bt Eggplant

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This regulatory approval came after strict and comprehensive biosafety evaluations conducted by the Joint Assessment Group comprised of representatives from Competent National Authorities-Biosafety Committees, and the certification of the Event EE-1 as a Plant Incorporated Protectant (Group 11A Insecticide) by the Fertilizer and Pesticide Authority. Prior to this approval for commercial propagation, the DA-BPI also approved Bt eggplant for direct use as food, feed, or for processing, affirming its safety for consumption.

Bt eggplant contains a natural protein from the soil bacterium *Bacillus thuringiensis*, making it resistant to the crop's most devastating insect pest – the eggplant fruit and shoot borer (EFSB). This Bt protein is highly specific to EFSB larvae and is safe for humans, animals, and other non-target arthropods.

“The biosafety approval for commercial propagation allows us to scale up our operations and ensure the availability of the Bt eggplant seeds in the coming years”, said Dr Lourdes Taylo, the current leader of the Bt Eggplant Project in the Philippines.

Bt eggplant was developed in India in 2002, but India banned commercial cultivation of Bt eggplant in 2010 because of opposition from environmentalists and food safety activists. In 2013 Bangladesh approved a genetically modified version of the eggplant, also known as aubergine and brinjal