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Report Highlights:

Hong Kong did not have any policy changes to regulations pertaining to genetically engineered (GE) products since the 2025 Agricultural Biotechnology Annual report. GE products are subject to the same food regulations as conventional foods. Hong Kong does not impose barriers on microbial biotech ingredients/foods. However, it does maintain production and import controls on living modified organisms. Hong Kong labeling requirements for GE foods are voluntary and there is limited Hong Kong government (HKG) or private sector research on agricultural biotechnology. Meanwhile, Hong Kong has become one of the first market in the region to sell cultivated meat and a growing fundraising hub for agri-biotech companies.

Executive Summary:

Hong Kong has implemented a Genetically Modified Organisms (Control of Release) Ordinance and a Genetically Modified Organisms (Documentation for Import and Export) Regulation in compliance with the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety. Any product containing “Genetically Modified Organisms” (“GMO”) intended for release into the environment must obtain approval prior to import into Hong Kong. Since the implementation of this regulation, there have not been any applications for release of “GMO” into the environment. The United States does not export living modified organisms to Hong Kong.

The HKG does not impose any trade barriers to GE products. It also has not imposed any regulatory barriers on microbial biotechnology and derived products used as food or food ingredients. While the HKG does not provide frequent updates on “GMO” products and requirements, many local manufacturing businesses prefer to market as non-GE. For example, Lee Kum Kee, the largest soy sauce maker, utilizes non-GE soybean in their soy sauce, and Vitasoy, another well-known soy beverage brand, also employs non-GE soybean as a main ingredient. They also specifically identify their packaging for the use of non-GE ingredients.

Regarding domestic production, Hong Kong has minimal GE crop production, which consists primarily of GE papayas grown for domestic consumption. Biotechnology in Hong Kong is limited to research carried out by academic institutions, but that research base is growing. In November 2025, the Research Grants Council (RGC) funded a five-year, five-university Centre for Plant Vacuole Biology and Biotechnology with an \$11.25 million (HK\$87.77 million) budget. The State Key Laboratory of Agrobiotechnology (SKLA) at Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK) has also refocused its work on climate-smart agriculture and on using plant cells as bioreactors. Hong Kong's advanced animal biotechnology facilities serve medical and conservation science only, not food production.

Hong Kong has also become an early market for novel proteins. In December 2024, Australian startup Vow launched cultivated quail products in Hong Kong. Building on the Centre for Food Safety's (CFS) August 2025 technical guidance on cultured meat safety assessment, analysts now rank Hong Kong alongside Singapore as a leading jurisdiction for clearing cultured meat and novel alternative protein ingredients.

Hong Kong's booming IPO market increasingly finances Chinese agri-food and agri-biotech firms. In 2026, three such companies pursued Hong Kong listings:

- Haid International (January), a feed and animal health company
- Muyuan Foods (January), a pig breeder
- Junlebao Dairy (August), a dairy producer

Each of these firms invests in R&D such as veterinary biologics, synthetic biology, and biotech-derived ingredients. In September 2026, media reported that Syngenta Group had confidentially filed for a Hong Kong IPO. Syngenta is controlled by China's state-owned Sinochem, and at up to \$10 billion (HK\$78 billion) the deal would be one of the city's largest IPO.

Hong Kong was the 22nd largest market for U.S. agricultural and related products in 2025, with an export value of \$1.6 billion. In the first eight months of 2026, U.S. agricultural and related product

exports to Hong Kong increased 19 percent to \$1.23 billion. Consumer-oriented products drove the increase, rising 27 percent to \$1.03 billion, led by beef and beef products (up 65 percent to \$452.6 million) and tree nuts (up 294 percent to \$108.8 million). Bulk and intermediate exports declined 19 percent and 8 percent, respectively. During this period, among major U.S.-grown GE crops, the United States exported \$4.1 million worth of corn, a negligible number of soybeans (less than \$50,000), and \$58.8 million of cotton to Hong Kong, though the cotton figure consists mostly of cargoes transshipped to other destinations.

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CHAPTER 1: PLANT BIOTECHNOLOGY

Part A: Production and Trade

A) RESEARCH AND PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT

In November 2025, the RGC announced funding under its Areas of Excellence Scheme for a five-year "Centre for Plant Vacuole Biology and Biotechnology," a collaboration among 5 Hong Kong universities. The center has an approved budget of \$11.25 million (HK\$87.77 million).

For all GE product development projects, work in Hong Kong is limited to laboratory research with field trials conducted in China. CUHK is the only university in Hong Kong that has successfully partnered with Chinese academic institutions to conduct field trials. Hong Kong does not maintain any regulatory barriers discouraging development of GE products.

CUHK houses a Partner State Key Laboratory of Agrobiotechnology research center approved by the Chinese government, that partners with research institutions in China for the development of plant biotechnology. In 2018, the Ministry of Science and Technology (MOST) of China approved renaming it as the State Key Laboratory of Agrobiotechnology (SKL). The Centre for Soybean Research is established under CUHK. It partners with soybean breeders and researchers in China to develop stress-tolerant soybeans. The Centre successfully identified a novel salt tolerance gene in wild soybeans through whole-genome sequencing (see Nature Communications 5:4340.) A few soybean cultivars have been tested with satisfactory results.

The Gansu Academy of Agricultural Sciences (link in Chinese) is the key partner with the Centre for this soybean project. It is understood that the Centre for Soybean Research has not applied for patents and has allowed Gansu Academy to have free use of the research results. According to the center, the soybean seeds in question are not GE. Instead, these are the end products which have been subjected to a marker-assisted selection process. In 2024, a new type of stress tolerant strain of soybeans has been approved for use in Gansu Province.

In 2023, researchers sent specimens of a soil bacteria to space on mainland China's Tianzhou 6 cargo craft, aiming to develop new strains through gene mutation that can improve the cultivation of soybeans. In 2024, Ming Pao Daily reported that Prof. Lam Hon-Ming, Director of the State Key Laboratory of Agrobiotechnology, is researching heat-resistant soybeans suitable for local cultivation in Pakistan. With funding for its soybean projects terminated in 2025, SKLA has organized its future research around two areas: "Climate-Smart Agriculture," which uses multi-omics to improve crop stress tolerance, and "Plant Cell Biology for Agriculture and Plant Biotechnology," which includes using plants and plant cells as bioreactors to produce pharmaceuticals and value-added products.

In early 2026, the Kadoorie Farm and Botanic Garden in Hong Kong introduced a phylogenetic framework and DNA database for Hong Kong orchids to help safeguard regional biodiversity. While this work focuses on conservation rather than GE crop development, it shows Hong Kong's growing capacity in genomic and trait-based plant research.

B) COMMERCIAL PRODUCTION

Aside from GE papaya, Hong Kong has no commercial production of GE crops and does not conduct field trials. Although Hong Kong does not ban the production of GE crops, prior approval from the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) is required before any GE crops may be planted. The AFCD has not received any applications for the planting of GE crops. Therefore, the AFCD's online public register for the production of GE crops reflects no production of GE crops in Hong Kong. (Note: the planting of GE papayas is exempted from obtaining prior approval from the AFCD. For details, please refer to Part B: Policy – Exemptions to Genetically Modified Ordinance.)

C) EXPORTS

As Hong Kong has very limited production of GE crops (GE papayas are not commercially grown), Hong Kong does not have any domestic GE crop exports. For processed products, Hong Kong's food import and export regulations do not distinguish between conventional and GE food products.

Therefore, it is possible that Hong Kong may export some food products that contain imported GE ingredients, such as soy sauce and soymilk beverages.

D) IMPORTS

Hong Kong’s food import regulation does not differentiate GE products from conventional ones (except for living modified organisms, as discussed in Part B Policy). In addition, there is no mandatory labeling for GE food products. Therefore, there is no official record or data for food imports containing GE ingredients.

Hong Kong imports relatively few bulk GE products. Soybean imports are mostly limited to non-GE soybeans due to market-driven factors of local soy sauce and soy beverage producers, many of which state that their products are “non-GMO” on their labels. Canadian Special Quality White Hilum (SQWH) grade soybeans are reportedly popular among Hong Kong buyers. In 2025, Canada accounted for 89 percent (\$15 million) of the Hong Kong’s soybean market, followed by China (10 percent or \$1.6 million) and the United States (1 percent or \$191,765).

Corn and papaya are two other products imported by Hong Kong that may have included GE varieties. In 2025, the United States was the leading supplier of corn (79 percent or \$2.2 million), followed by India (9 percent or \$250,678) and Pakistan (8 percent or \$233,819) and papaya (62 percent or \$2.7 million) followed by the Philippines (23 percent or \$1 million).

Survey Reflecting Importation and Production of GE Crops

AFCD conducts annual surveys for the presence of GE products by drawing samples from various imported and locally grown crops from local markets and farms in Hong Kong. However, the survey only includes foods that are under AFCD’s regulatory portfolio. Processed products are not covered by the survey as they are not under the oversight of AFCD.

In 2025-2026, AFCD tested 502 samples from a variety of imported and local produce, animal feed, soybean, seeds, flowers, and fish for the presence of GE ingredients. Of all the samples tested, 111 samples (22 percent) reflected GE ingredients, with papayas (including imported and locally grown papayas) accounting for about 91 percent of all GE detected samples. For the first time, the survey also detected GE pineapple, with two samples of Pinkglow® pineapple from Costa Rica testing positive. Of all local produce, papaya is the only category that tested positive as GE.

Hong Kong: Table 1. Survey for GE Products (2025-2026)

	No. of Tested Samples	No. of GE Positive Samples	Species of Samples with Positive Result
Animal Feed	4	0	
Fish	25	8	Tetra Fish, Tiger Barb, Zebra Fish
Flower & Plant	18	0	
Imported Fruit	78	26	Papaya, Pineapple

Imported Vegetable	71	0	
Local Produce	244	77	Papaya
Other Imported Food and Feed	15	0	
Seeds	47	0	
Total	502	111	Papaya, Pineapple, Tetra Fish, Tiger Barb, Zebra Fish

Source: Hong Kong Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department -GMO Survey Result 2025-2026

As Hong Kong food laws do not distinguish between conventional and GE food products, no action was taken by AFCD relative to sampled products identified as containing GE ingredients.

E) FOOD AID

Hong Kong does not provide nor receive food aid.

F) TRADE BARRIERS

Presently, Hong Kong does not have any biotechnology-related trade barriers adversely affecting U.S. exports.

Part B: Policy

A) REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

The Environment and Ecology Bureau (EEB) determines policy and regulation for GE foods. The Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) is the Bureau's department for food safety, which administers programs through its Centre for Food Safety (CFS). The administration of policies relating to agricultural production and import, and export of animals and plants falls under the portfolio of AFCD within the Bureau.

Pre-Market Safety Assessment Scheme

The HKG first indicated in 2013 that it would launch a public consultation on a mandatory pre-market safety assessment scheme (PMSAS) for GE events. According to the proposed regulatory framework, a GE developer would be required to register a GE event prior to the importation of a food product containing that GE event. Food manufacturers and importers would be responsible for ensuring that imported products contain only approved GE ingredients. If a GE event has previously been evaluated under a foreign regulatory scheme, then the applicant could provide approval certificates and safety evaluations for review by the CFS. A suitable transitional arrangement for GE food that is already on the market would be established should the pre-market safety assessment scheme become effective. In September 2021, the HKG notified its latest position on PMSAS to the Legislative Council stating that Hong Kong does not need to launch the PMSAS because biotech events of GE products available in international trade have been approved by countries and regions with PMSAS. Thus, Hong Kong determined it does not need to duplicate efforts in evaluating such GE events.

Occasional calls by consumer groups and certain Legislative Council members for mandatory labeling of GE foods have not moved the government to further action. Instead, importers are encouraged to comply with voluntary guidelines introduced in 2006. The HKG has not announced plans for new developments for labeling requirements with respect to GE food products, though officials do closely monitor the international development and regulation of GE food products.

Ordinance and Regulation Implementing the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety

Legal Term	Laws and Regulations where term is used	Legal Definition
Genetically modified organism and “GMO”	Genetically Modified Organisms (Control of Release) Ordinance	means a living organism that possesses a novel combination of genetic materials obtained through the use of modern biotechnology
Living organism	Genetically Modified Organisms (Control of Release) Ordinance	means a biological entity capable of transferring or replicating genetic materials, including sterile organisms, viruses and viroids, but does not include a human being
Modern biotechnology	The Genetically Modified Organisms (Control of Release) (Exemption) Notice	means the application of in vitro nucleic acid techniques (including recombinant deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA) and direct injection of nucleic acid into cells or organelles), or techniques involving the fusion of cells beyond the taxonomic family, that— (a) overcome natural physiological reproductive or recombination barriers; and (b) are not techniques used in traditional breeding and selection.

Hong Kong implemented a Genetically Modified Organisms (Control of Release) Ordinance and the Genetically Modified Organisms (Documentation for Import and Export) Regulation in March 2011 to implement measures pursuant to China’s membership to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety. The Ordinance stipulates that the production and importation of “GMO” to Hong Kong (except for exemptions provided by the Exemption Notice, discussed further below) that are intended to be released into the environment requires prior approval from AFCD. AFCD maintains a “GMO” online register

which keeps non-confidential information received pertaining to the “GMO” approval applications. As of October 2026, the [AFCD online register webpage](#) does not show any application entries.

Under the law, documentation requirements are prescribed for all shipments containing “GMO,” however, according to the law “specified forms for prescribed documents are not mandatory.” Thus, the law advised that any documents, such as commercial invoices or import/export manifests, which contain the required information, could satisfy the documentation requirements under the Regulation. According to the subsidiary regulation, documentation is required for the following categories of “GMO:”

- a) “GMO” intended for direct consumption as food, feed, or for processing; (FFP)
- b) “GMO” intended for contained use; and
- c) “GMO” intended for release into the environment.

AFCD provides [guidelines on documentation requirements and documentation samples](#).

No adverse impact from these regulations has been reported by U.S. food and agricultural exporters to Hong Kong.

Exemptions to GM Ordinance

The Genetically Modified Organisms (Control of Release) (Exemption) Notice made under the Genetically Modified Organisms (Control of Release) Ordinance took effect June 23, 2012. The Notice exempts all varieties of GE papaya and any “GMO” that is contained in a veterinary vaccine (live recombinant veterinary vaccines) from the application of the Ordinance’s provision that a person must not knowingly cause a “GMO” to be released or maintain the life of a “GMO” in the environment.

The Notice also exempts two commercialized varieties of “GMO” papaya (GE papaya with the unique identifier code of CUH-CP551-8 and GE papaya with the transformation event code of Huanong 1) and live recombinant veterinary vaccines from the application of the Ordinance’s provision that a person must not knowingly import a “GMO” that is intended for release into the environment.

There are reports that the market has available unexempted “GMO” papaya seeds, the unapproved Taiwan strains (i.e. the TW-lines), which are widely used in China because they are more disease-tolerant than the approved strains. Given that legal actions against seed vendors can be initiated only when there is proof suggesting that they have knowingly imported the unexempted “GMO” papaya seeds, the Hong Kong government primarily takes educational rather than litigation measures to tackle the situation. Seed traders are reminded not to import seeds from unknown sources.

With the Exemption Notice, the HKG exempted local papaya growers from applying for approval to release “GMO” crops into the environment. Most locally produced papayas are backyard crops for personal consumption with little commercial value. The HKG position is that the exempted “GMO” poses a low risk to the local biodiversity. According to a risk assessment conducted by the HKG, papaya is an exotic species with no close relatives in Hong Kong and is unlikely to pose a risk to local biodiversity. The inserted genes of “GMO” papaya cannot pass on to local wild plants. The HKG conducted a second risk assessment in 2015, and the study yielded a similar result.

The exemption also caters to the need of the application of live recombinant veterinary vaccines in emergency situations such as an outbreak of a pandemic disease.

B) APPROVALS/AUTHORIZATIONS

Prior approval is required for the production and importation of “GMO” that are intended to be released into the environment (except for the exemptions mentioned above.)

C) STACKED OR PYRAMIDED EVENT APPROVALS/AUTHORIZATIONS

No regulations pertain to stacked or pyramided event approvals.

D) FIELD TESTING

No field tests are currently conducted in Hong Kong.

E) INNOVATIVE BIOTECHNOLOGIES

No related regulations on regulating innovative biotechnologies exist. However, the HKG is monitoring the development for the definition and regulation of synthetic biology under the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties (COP-MOP) to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety. The government’s position is that they will keep in view of decisions reached by COP-MOP on synthetic biology which might have an implication on Hong Kong’s implementation of the Genetically Modified Organisms (Control of Release) Ordinance (the Ordinance). In the meantime, Hong Kong follows the existing definition of “GMO” in the Ordinance and will enforce the Ordinance if modified organisms of synthetic biology fall within the existing “GMO” definition in the Ordinance.

F) COEXISTENCE

No rules in place or proposed on coexistence.

G) LABELING AND TRACEABILITY

Labeling of GE Food Products - Voluntary Labeling Approach

Mandatory labeling for GE foods or feeds is not required. In 2006, the CFS released guidelines for voluntary labeling of “GMO” foods in response to public calls for consumer information. In 2008, the HKG announced there was no need for a mandatory labeling law in Hong Kong based on an evaluation of the voluntary labeling scheme and that there currently is no international consensus on mandatory labeling. The HKG reiterated its position not to adopt mandatory labeling in a paper submitted to the Legislative Council in 2021. The HKG chose to closely monitor international developments on this issue and promote the voluntary guidelines to the trade for more widespread adoption.

The guidelines were formulated by a working group established under CFS, with membership from various sectors including manufacturing, wholesale, retail, consumer groups, and government departments. The guidelines are only applied to prepackaged foods and are advisory in nature; they do

not have legal effect. Adoption is voluntary and not binding. The guidelines are based on the following principles:

- The labeling of “GMO” food will comply with existing food legislation.
- The threshold level applied in the guidelines for labeling purposes is five percent, in respect to individual food ingredients.
- Any food item containing 5 percent or more “GMO” content in its respective food ingredient(s) should be labeled "genetically modified" in parenthesis after the name of the food/food ingredient in the list of ingredients.
- Negative labeling, e.g. “GMO-free,” is not recommended and not encouraged where no GE counterpart of the respective product exists. The threshold for negative labeling is 5 percent.
- Additional declaration on the food label is recommended when significant modifications of the food, e.g. composition, nutrition value, level of anti-nutritional factors, natural toxicant, presence of allergen, intended use, introduction of an animal gene, etc., have taken place.

For products with negative labeling, the HKG may take the initiative to test the products for “GMO” ingredients, and a zero tolerance will be adopted for testing purposes. If products are found to have misleading labeling, a retailer may be subject to prosecution under Section 61 – False Labeling and Advertisement of Food or Drugs of Chapter 132 Public Health and Municipal Services Ordinance.

If the trade chooses to apply negative labeling, the government advises using less definite terms such as “sourced from non-GMO sources” (which contains less than five percent of “GMO” content) and to have documentation to substantiate such declaration. For more details, please refer to GAIN Report HK#6026.

H) MONITORING AND TESTING

AFCD conducts an annual survey for the presence of GE ingredients in various imported and locally grown crops available in local markets and farms in Hong Kong. The randomly collected samples, which totaled around 502, do not include any processed food products outside the regulatory scope of AFCD. The results of the 2025-2026 survey are provided in Table 1 above. As Hong Kong food laws do not distinguish between conventional and GE food products, no action was taken by AFCD relative to sampled products identified as containing GE ingredients.

While the AFCD has oversight into agricultural production and the import and export of animals and plants, the CFS is the food safety regulatory authority. The CFS has in place a regular food surveillance program taking about 65,000 food samples annually for microbiological, chemical, and radiation level testing. This surveillance program does not cover the identification of GE ingredients in foods.

I) LOW LEVEL PRESENCE (LLP) POLICY

According to the voluntary labeling guidelines of “GMO” food products, the threshold level applied for labeling purposes is five percent with respect to individual food ingredients. Details of the labeling guidelines may be found under Chapter 1, Part B, (G) Labeling.

Under the Genetically Modified Organisms (Control of Release) Ordinance and the Genetically Modified Organisms (Documentation for Import and Export) Regulation, the documentation requirements does not apply if:

- a) The “GMO” products are imported or exported in a lot together with other living organisms;
- b) The “GMO” products are unintentionally mixed with those other living organisms; and
- c) The percentage of the amount of the “GMO” to the total amount of living organisms in the lot does not exceed the prescribed percentage.

The prescribed percentages are set as follows

- 1. 5 percent for “GMO” for direct consumption as food, feed, or for processing; (FFP)
- 2. 0 percent for “GMO” intended for contained use; and
- 3. 0 percent for “GMO” intended for release into the environment.

J) ADDITIONAL REGULATORY REQUIREMENTS

None

K) INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY RIGHTS (IPR)

While Hong Kong currently has no commercial plantings of GE crops, Hong Kong has intellectual property legislation covering patents, designs, copyright, trade descriptions; layout-design (topography) of integrated circuits and plant varieties protection.

L) CARTAGENA PROTOCOL RATIFICATION

China ratified the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety in 2005, and its provisions were extended to Hong Kong on May 9, 2011, upon the implementation of the Genetically Modified Organisms (Control of Release) Ordinance and the Genetically Modified Organisms (Documentation for Import and Export) Regulation. Details of the Ordinance and Regulation may be found under Chapter 1, Part B, A) Regulatory Framework. This development has not impacted on trade.

Hong Kong does not send any delegates to the CPB Biennial Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties (COP-MOP). Representatives from AFCD have attended previous COP-MOPs as members of the Chinese delegation.

M) INTERNATIONAL TREATIES AND FORUMS

Hong Kong does not actively participate in discussions related to GE plants within international organizations. Hong Kong is a member of the World Trade Organization (WTO), Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) and the Pacific Economic Cooperation Council (PECC). In addition, Hong Kong has observer status on the Trade Committee of the Organization for Economic Cooperation

and Development (OECD). Hong Kong's participation in CODEX Alimentarius, the World Health Organization (WHO), the World Organization for Animal Health (WOAH), and the Asia Pacific Plant Protection Commission is not as an individual member, but as part of the Chinese delegation.

Hong Kong, as a Special Administrative Region of China, is not necessarily subject to all international agreements under China's membership. Under Article 153 of the Basic Law, Hong Kong will be consulted prior to international agreements being extended to Hong Kong.

N) RELATED ISSUES

None

Part C: Marketing

A) PUBLIC/PRIVATE OPINIONS

In recent years, public calls for mandatory labeling of GE products have diminished. The food industry generally opposes mandatory labeling of GE foods on the grounds that it would limit consumer choice, reduce the variety of food supplies to Hong Kong, and add a burden to both consumers and the industry. Additionally, multiple Hong Kong retailers have indicated they would not import any products that carry a GE label.

The HKG's response to the call for mandatory labeling has been to stress that there has been no international consensus on labeling of GE food products. Government officials have indicated that the safety of foods including GE foods is monitored by the prevailing food surveillance program. In short, in recent years, there have been relatively few voices asking for mandatory labeling of GE food products in Hong Kong.

B) MARKET ACCEPTANCE/STUDIES

Market analysts report that many Hong Kong consumers are generally not concerned about the existence of GE ingredients in local foods and are more focused on prices, food safety, and nutritional values. Organic food products are growing in popularity, but consumers do not necessarily understand that organic products may not contain GE ingredients.

In September 2026, media reported that Syngenta Group, a Swiss seeds and crop protection company controlled by China's state-owned Sinochem, confidentially filed for a Hong Kong IPO of up to \$10 billion.

CHAPTER 2: ANIMAL BIOTECHNOLOGY

Part D: Production and Trade

A) RESEARCH AND PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT

There is no genetic engineering or cloning in Hong Kong's limited livestock production.

Hong Kong has advanced animal biotechnology facilities, including Hong Kong University's Transgenic Core Facility and Zebrafish Core Facility, and City University's Laboratory Animal Research Unit, but these centers focus on genetically modified rodents and zebrafish for human disease modeling and on stem cell preservation for endangered species. No research or development of GE livestock or aquatic species for local food supply currently takes place in Hong Kong.

B) COMMERCIAL PRODUCTION

None

C) EXPORTS

None

D) IMPORTS

Hong Kong does not import GE livestock or aquatic species for food, and its GE animal imports consist only of laboratory research animals and small numbers of aquarium fish. Under the Genetically Modified Organisms (Control of Release) Ordinance, research animals imported for contained use require a declaration on import documents, while animals intended for release into the environment require prior AFCD approval.

In AFCD's 2025-2026 survey, eight of 25 aquarium fish samples tested positive for GE traits (tetra fish, tiger barb, and zebra fish). All rice fish samples, including six collected from the wild in Hong Kong, tested negative.

E) TRADE BARRIERS

None

Part E: Policy

A) REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

The EEB determines the policy direction of GE animals and products derived from these animals or their offspring. FEHD is the Bureau’s department for food safety that administers its programs through its CFS. Administration of policies relating to GE animals and/or livestock clones falls under the portfolio of the AFCD within the Bureau.

Genetically Modified Organisms (Control of Release) Ordinance

Legal Term	Laws and Regulations where term is used	Legal Definition
Genetically modified organism and “GMO”	Genetically Modified Organisms (Control of Release) Ordinance	means a living organism that possesses a novel combination of genetic materials obtained through the use of modern

	Genetically Modified Organisms (Control of Release) Ordinance	biotechnology
Living organism		means a biological entity capable of transferring or replicating genetic materials, including sterile organisms, viruses and viroids, but does not include a human being
Modern biotechnology		means the application of in vitro nucleic acid techniques (including recombinant deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA) and direct injection of nucleic acid into cells or organelles), or techniques involving the fusion of cells beyond the taxonomic family, that— (a) overcome natural physiological reproductive or recombination barriers; and (b) are not techniques used in traditional breeding and selection.

With the implementation of Genetically Modified Organisms (Control of Release) Ordinance, the importation of live transgenic animals that are to be released into the environment, must obtain prior approval from the AFCD. If imported for contained use, prior approval is not required, though a declaration must be made on import documents.

The HKG maintains a Genetically Modified Organisms Registry which lists all imports of “GMO” that are to be released into the environment. As of October 2026, the Registry remained empty.

The HKG does not have any specific regulation on food products derived from cloned animals. Regarding cloning animal technology, the HKG has no current plans to conduct a risk assessment.

B) APPROVALS/AUTHORIZATIONS

Prior approval is required for the production and importation of “GMO” products that are intended to be released into the environment (except for the exemption mentioned above.)

C) INNOVATIVE BIOTECHNOLOGIES

None

D) LABELING AND TRACEABILITY

None

E) ADDITIONAL REGULATORY REQUIREMENTS

[U.S. export guidelines](#) updated in mid-2026 remind exporters that any GMO research animals shipped to Hong Kong must have standalone GMO documentation under the Genetically Modified Organisms (Documentation for Import and Export) Regulation. Exporters must handle this documentation entirely separately from standard APHIS-endorsed veterinary health certificates.

F) INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY RIGHTS (IPR)

The HKG has not considered legislation to address intellectual property rights for animal biotechnologies.

G) INTERNATIONAL TREATIES AND FORUMS

Hong Kong participates in the World Organization for Animal Health (WOAH) as part of the Chinese delegation. Hong Kong does not actively participate in discussions related to animal biotechnology within international organizations.

Hong Kong was chosen to be the venue for the Second International Summit on Human Genome Editing which was held in November 2018. The three-day summit was co-hosted by the Academy of Sciences Hong Kong, the Royal Society of London, the U.S. National Academy of Sciences, and the U.S. National Academy of Medicine. The Summit aimed to continue the global dialogue on human genome editing in relation to questions and concerns pertaining to science, application, ethics, and governance of human genome editing.

H) RELATED ISSUES

None

Part F: Marketing

A) PUBLIC/PRIVATE OPINIONS

Very limited number of discussions of GE animals and cloned animals or products from cloned animals take place in Hong Kong.

B) MARKET ACCEPTANCE/STUDIES

There is no urgency or calls to develop policy/legislation on the importation of cloned animals.

CHAPTER 3: MICROBIAL BIOTECHNOLOGY

Part G: Production and Trade

A) COMMERCIAL PRODUCTION

None

B) EXPORTS

None

C) IMPORTS

In December 2024, Australian food-tech startup Vow launched cultivated Japanese quail products at The Aubrey in the Mandarin Oriental, including a cultured foie gras alternative called "Forged Gras." This launch made Hong Kong one of the first markets in Asia to sell cultivated meat, joining the U.S. and Singapore.

Hong Kong continues to allow microbial food ingredients, such as soy leghemoglobin used in Impossible Foods products. The market also features products like ice cream made with Perfect Day's whey protein—a non-animal protein launched locally in January 2021 that is developed through fermentation and is molecularly identical to cow's milk. For additional details, please refer to the ATO [report](#): Microbial Food Ingredients Encounter No Regulatory Barriers in Hong Kong.

D) TRADE BARRIERS

None

Part H: Policy

A) REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

Currently, Hong Kong does not have specific food regulations for microbial food ingredients. Microbial food ingredients that are not "GMO" are subject to the same food regulations as conventional food. "GMO" products are subject to the regulatory framework as described in Part B above. Post is not aware of any HKG plans to stipulate new regulations targeting microbial food ingredients.

In August 2025, the CFS issued a set of "[technical guidance notes on the safety assessment of cultured meats](#)" for trade and public to reference. The notes provide guidance on the safety evaluation of cultured meats and established a safety assessment panel.

B) APPROVALS/AUTHORIZATIONS:

Not applicable, as long as the product in question is not a "GMO".

C) LABELING AND TRACEABILITY

There are no signs that the HKG is mapping out policies to regulate the traceability and labeling of microbial biotech-derived food ingredients. If food ingredients are not “GMO” as defined in Hong Kong’s Genetically Modified Organisms (Control of Release) Ordinance, they are subject to the same regulations as conventional food items.

The ice cream products in Hong Kong using Perfect Day’s whey protein are marketed as dairy-free products and Impossible Foods highlights the plant-based nature of its products. There is no mentioning of any food ingredients being biotech driven in their promotional materials or labels.

D) MONITORING AND TESTING

In connection with plants and animals, AFCD conducts an annual survey for the presence of GE produce in the market (please refer above to Part B, Section H). The Food and Environmental Hygiene Department, which is the food safety regulatory agency, releases any food-related monitoring results. Post is not aware of any monitoring or testing of microbial-derived foods by the Hong Kong government.

E) ADDITIONAL REGULATORY REQUIREMENTS

None

F) INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY RIGHTS

Please refer above to Part B, Section K.

G) RELATED ISSUES

None

Part I: Marketing

A) PUBLIC/PRIVATE OPINIONS

Post has not seen widespread discussion of microbial biotechnology in the media, though plant-based foods are slowly gaining popularity in the market. There is not much association of plant-based protein with biotechnology.

B) MARKET ACCEPTANCE/STUDIES

While the public may not be deeply familiar with the technical concept of microbial biotechnology, Hong Kong consumers are increasingly embracing healthy lifestyles, driving demand for organic, vegetarian, and vegan foods. Over the past decade, the market has seen a surge in plant-based meat alternatives. Beyond Meat was introduced to Hong Kong in 2015 by a local entrepreneur, who subsequently launched a plant-based pork alternative called Omnipork. Later, in April 2018, Hong Kong

became the first overseas market for Impossible Foods' plant-based beef alternative. Despite the prevalence of these products, the general public rarely associates them with biotechnology.

On the corporate side, Hong Kong continues to strengthen its position as a leading funding hub for biotechnology. In April 2018, the Hong Kong Exchanges and Clearing Limited (HKEX) launched a new listing regime (Chapter 18A) that allows pre-revenue biotech companies and new economy companies with non-standard share structures to raise capital. According to the Hong Kong Trade Development Council, by 2024, 67 pre-revenue/pre-profit biotechnology businesses had raised approximately \$16 billion (HK\$122 billion) under this system. While the majority of these listings are focused on medical and health-related products, agricultural and food-based companies are also utilizing the Hong Kong market to fund biotech research.

Recent public listings highlight the growing intersection of agriculture, biotechnology, and Hong Kong's capital markets:

In January 2026, Muyuan Foods, China's largest pig breeder, sought to raise \$1.4 billion in a Hong Kong share sale to fund R&D in breeding, smart farming, nutrition management, and biosecurity. The company runs the Muyuan Laboratory, a synthetic biology platform developing bio-produced amino acids to replace part of the soybean meal in feed.

On August 20, 2026, Junlebao Dairy Group, China's third-largest dairy company by 2025 retail sales value, refiled for a Hong Kong Main Board listing after its earlier application lapsed. The company works with biotech ingredient supplier Cabio Biotech (Wuhan) and conducts scientific research with Peking University.

Attachments:

No Attachments