

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY
LOK SABHA**

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:612
ANSWERED ON:25.11.2005
EXTINCTION OF BANANA
Jagannath Dr. M.

Will the Minister of SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

- (a) whether Bananas may face extinction in the near future on account of pests and diseases, and
- (b) if so, the genetic engineering efforts proposed to save bananas from going extinct?

Answer

MINISTER OF STATE (INDEPENDENT CHARGE) OF THE MINISTRY OF SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY AND MINISTER OF STATE (INDEPENDENT CHARGE) OF THE DEPARTMENT OF OCEAN DEVELOPMENT (SHRI KAPIL SIBAI)

(a) & (b) As per a report in an international journal, New Scientist (January, 2003), a leading researcher has stated that Banana could be wiped out by two diseases, namely, Panama disease and Black Sigatoka, that have struck Africa, South America and Asia. However the reports by American Phytopathological Society (APS) and UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) state that banana is not on the verge of extinction since it is unlikely that these diseases will prove fatal. These diseases can be controlled through use of fungicides and pesticides. In addition, use of germplasm of greater genetic diversity for plantation and developing genetically engineered disease resistant plants will also help in tackling this problem. Studies on genetic engineering and genomics are underway in many research laboratories in India and abroad.

So far, there is no risk of extinction of Banana in the India because bananas are cultivated under polyclonal system, whereas it is grown as monoclonal system in Latin America and Caribbean countries. India harbours a wide range of banana varieties; some of which constitute a valuable gene pool which can be used to develop resistance to major pests and diseases for use in developing improved varieties.