

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA  
ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS  
LOK SABHA**

STARRED QUESTION NO:379  
ANSWERED ON:21.04.2010  
GM FOODS  
Tewari Shri Manish

**Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:**

- (a) the powers of the Genetic Engineering Approval Committee (GEAC) and the mandate of the Review Committee on Genetic Manipulation (RCGM);
- (b) whether the opinion of the regulatory authority can be overruled;
- (c) if so, the law under which it can be done;
- (d) the scientific reasons advanced for withholding the commercial cultivation of Bt. Brinjal especially after it had been cleared by the GEAC;
- (e) whether the Government proposes to formulate fresh guidelines to deal with the Genetically Modified (GM) foods;
- (f) if so, the details thereof; and
- (g) the number of GM foods that are in the research pipeline as on 1 April, 2010?

**Answer**

MINISTER OF STATE (INDEPENDENT CHARGE) FOR ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS(SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH)

(a) to (g) A Statement is laid on the Table of the House.

STATEMENT REFERRED TO IN THE REPLY TO PARTS (a) TO (g) OF THE LOK SABHA STARRED QUESTION NO. 379 BY SHRI MANISH TEWARI REGARDING GM FOODS DUE FOR REPLY ON 21.04.2010

(a) The Review Committee on Genetic Manipulation (RCGM) and the Genetic Engineering Approval Committee (GEAC) have been established under 'Rules for the Manufacture, Use/Import/Export and Storage of Hazardous Micro Organisms (HMOs) / Genetically Engineered Organisms (GMOs) or Cells notified by the Ministry of Environment and Forests on December 5, 1989 under the provisions of the 'Environment (Protection) Act', 1986 in the Department of Biotechnology, Ministry of Science and Technology and the Ministry of Environment and Forests, respectively. The mandate of RCGM is to

- (i) monitor the safety related aspects in respect of on-going research projects and activities involving GMOs/ HMOs;
- (ii) bring out Manuals of guidelines specifying procedures for regulatory processes with a view to ensure environmental safety; and
- (iii) review all ongoing projects of high risk category and controlled field experiments to ensure that adequate precautions and containment conditions are followed as per the guidelines. The GEAC is the apex body having a mandate to accord approval of activities involving
  - (i) large scale use of hazardous microorganisms and recombinants in research and industrial production from the environmental angle; and
  - (ii) environmental release of GMOs and products including experimental field trials.

(b) to (d) The GEAC is the apex body to grant approvals for large scale use and environmental release of GMOs under the above said Rules. The GEAC in its meeting held on 14.10.2009, concluded that Bt Brinjal is safe for environmental release. However, the Committee decided that "Since this decision of the GEAC will have major policy implications, the GEAC decided to forward the recommendations and report of the Expert Committee on the safety and efficacy of Bt brinjal event EEI to the Government for a final view". Subsequent to this decision, the Ministry had organized public consultations at seven locations (mainly brinjal growing areas) namely Kolkata, Bhubaneswar, Ahmedabad, Nagpur, Chandigarh, Hyderabad and Bangalore during January –February, 2010. As part of the consultation process, the Minister had also written to several Chief Ministers of brinjal growing States as well as national and international experts to elicit their views on this GM crop. Several concerns emerged including those voiced by some Scientists during the national consultations which include health issues, loss of biodiversity, loss of indigenous varieties through contamination of gene pool, sustainability of the technology, consumer choice and labeling, adequacy of regulatory process, etc. In the absence of scientific consensus and opposition from the State Governments and others, the Minister on February 09, 2010 decided to impose a moratorium on commercialization of Bt brinjal until all concerns expressed by the public, NGOs, scientists and the State Governments are addressed adequately. Decision of the Minister which includes views of various stakeholders can be viewed at MoEF website ([www.envfor.nic.in](http://www.envfor.nic.in)).

(e) & (f) The GEAC has been requested to address concerns that have emerged during the public consultations for resolving all scientific issues relating to Bt brinjal in consultations with eminent scientists.

(g) The GM food crops which are in the research pipeline as on 1.4.2010 include, rice, okra, brinjal, potato, groundnut, tomato, corn, cabbage, cauliflower, mustard, wheat, sorghum, watermelon, sugarcane, papaya, apple, black pepper, black gram, capsicum, cardamom, cassava, chickpea, chili, cowpea, cucumber, finger millet, lettuce, mulberry, muskmelon, pea, pearl millet, pigeon pea, pomegranate, soybean, and tea,