

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

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:492

ANSWERED ON:28.07.2010

CERTIFICATION OF GM SEEDS

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

- (a) whether any tests have been conducted on the viability and safety of the Genetically Modified (GM) seeds developed in the country;
- (b) if so, the details thereof and the outcome thereof;
- (c) whether the Government has any action plan for certification of these GM seeds and their use in view of the protests made in this regard;
- (d) if so, the details thereof;
- (e) whether the Government has recently convened a meeting on Bt. Brinjal in the country;
- (f) if so, the decision arrived at the meeting; and
- (g) the steps taken by the Government to implement the decision arrived at the meeting?

Answer

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

(a) All genetically modified organisms (GMO) are regulated under 'Rules for the Manufacture, Use, Import, Export and Storage of Hazardous Microorganisms/Genetically Engineered Organisms or Cells 1989 (known as 'Rules, 1989') under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986. In view of various concerns related to the safety, efficacy and agronomic performance of genetically modified seeds, extensive evaluation and regulatory approval process takes place before any GMO is approved for commercialization. This includes generation of relevant biosafety information and its elaborate analysis to ensure food, feed and environmental safety. The environmental safety assessment includes studies on pollen escape out- crossing, aggressiveness and weediness, effect of the gene on non-target organisms, presence of protein in soil and its effect on soil micro-flora, confirmation of the absence of terminator gene and baseline susceptibility studies. The food and feed safety studies include assessment on composition analysis, allergenicity and toxicological studies and feeding studies on fish, chicken, cows and buffaloes. In case, the transgenic crop is not found suitable for release in the environment or human consumption, the product is rejected during the trial stage itself. A final view on the commercialization of GM plants is taken only when there is a clear economic and technical justification for release of the product.

(b) As an outcome of the above evaluation process, Bt cotton is the only transgenic crop approved for commercial cultivation in India under Rules 1989.

(c)&(d) There is no action plan for certification of GM Seeds under Rules 1989 or the Seeds Act, 1966.

(e)to(g) This Ministry had organized seven public consultations on Bt brinjal during January- February 2010. In the absence of scientific consensus and opposition from the State Governments and others, the Ministry 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.