

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

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:1682

ANSWERED ON:07.03.2011

GENETICALLY MODIFIED CROPS

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

- (a) whether the Government has assessed the likely benefits to the agriculture sector including food security by the introduction of Genetically Modified (GM) crops;
- (b) if so, the details thereof;
- (c) whether introduction of GM crops has been opposed by certain agricultural experts and farmers;
- (d) if so, the details thereof alongwith the major concerns expressed against their introduction and the reaction of the Government thereto;
- (e) whether the Government has taken into consideration such concerns; and
- (f) if so, the details thereof ?

Answer

MINISTER OF THE STATE (INDEPENDENT CHARGE) IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH)

(a) & (b) In view of various concerns related to the safety, efficacy and agronomic performance of Genetically Modified (GM) seeds, the Government of India is assessing the merits and demerits of each GM crop on a case by case basis even if it is approved for cultivation in other countries. Before any GM crop is approved for commercial cultivation, extensive evaluation and regulatory approval process takes place. 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 GM 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 scientific studies establish that it is safe for the human health and environment. As of date, Bt. Cotton is the only transgenic crop approved for commercial cultivation in India. Experience with Bt. Cotton indicates that it has been beneficial to farmers in terms of enhanced economic benefits accrued from higher marketable yield and lower usage of pesticide sprays.

(c) to (f) Yes Sir; The Ministry has received representations from various State Governments, Non-Governmental Organizations and some sections of scientific and farming communities regarding safety of the Genetically Modified (GM) crops. They have expressed apprehensions on its long-term impact on human health and environment including the rich genetic wealth existing in our country. Based on the outcome of the public consultations on Bt brinjal during January-February 2010, the Government has imposed a moratorium on commercial release of Bt brinjal event-EE-1 till such time independent scientific studies establish that Bt brinjal is safe for the human health and environment from the point of view of its long term impacts.