

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
AGRICULTURE
LOK SABHA**

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:4369
ANSWERED ON:04.08.2009
GM CROP TRIALS
Gandhi Smt. Maneka Sanjay

Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

- (a) whether the Union Government has allowed Genetically Modified (GM) Crops field trials in the country including for rice;
- (b) if so, the details and reasons thereof;
- (c) whether the Union Government sought the views of the State Governments before permitting GM crops field trials in the country;
- (d) if so, the details thereof;
- (e) whether some State Governments have opposed such trials;
- (f) if so, the details thereof and reasons forwarded by them;
- (g) whether despite such opposition the Union Government permitted GM crops trials in some States;
- (h) if so, the details thereof and reaction of the Government thereto; and
- (i) the details of the States which have adopted GM free policy in the country?

Answer

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE AND MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD & PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (PROF. K.V. THOMAS)

(a) & (b): Yes, Madam. The Genetic Engineering Approval Committee (GEAC) has accorded approval for conducting field trials with GM crops namely; cotton, rice, okra, brinjal, potato, groundnut, tomato, corn, cabbage, cauliflower, mustard and sorghum.

The field trials of GM crops have been permitted as they have beneficial characteristics such as insect resistance, herbicide tolerance, virus resistance and improved product quality. The `stacking` of these traits is an important feature that has been used increasingly to tackle multiple constraints in agriculture. It is expected that development of GM crops with tolerance to drought and salinity, improved nitrogen use efficiency, enhanced yield, quality and nutritional properties coupled with existing traits will be technically feasible in the near future and be a real value addition. It will make agriculture more efficient and competitive to meet the challenges of hunger, poverty, malnutrition and food security in tomorrow's world.

(c) & (d): As per Rules, 1989, the Genetic Engineering Approval Committee is the apex body to accord approval for field trials of GM crops. However, the concerned State Government agencies including Chief Secretary, Secretary, State Department of Agriculture and Director, State Agricultural Universities (SAUs) are informed of the trials to ensure strict compliance of the biosafety measures.

(e) & (f): Officially, no State Government has opposed such trials. However, the Ministry of Environment and Forests had received a complaint from Prof. T K Bose, Member, West Bengal State Agriculture Commission that Bt okra field trials being conducted in Nadia district, West Bengal during 2007 are illegal as the M/s Maharashtra Seeds Pvt Ltd (Mahyco) have not obtained the approval of the State Biotechnology Co-ordination Committee and District Level Committees, notified under `Rules for the Manufacture, Use, Import, Export and Storage of Hazardous Micro Organisms (HMOs)/Genetically Engineered Organisms (GMOs) or Cells, 1989` notified under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986. It has been clarified that as per the said Rules, the Genetic Engineering Approval Committee (GEAC) is the apex body for permitting field trials of GM crops. However, the approvals granted by the GEAC are communicated to the concerned State Departments agencies. Subsequently, the State Government of West Bengal has informed that large number of agricultural farms in almost all the districts and different agro-climatic zones are available with the State and therefore, in future, all field trials may be allowed in agricultural farms of the Government instead of leased land from farmers. The GEAC has agreed to the above suggestion.

(g) No, Madam.

(h) Does not arise.

(i) The Ministry of Environment & Forests, Government of India and Department of Biotechnology, Ministry of Science & Technology,

Government of India intimated that no State has adopted any GM free policy.