

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS
RAJYA SABHA
QUESTION NO 21.12.2009
ANSWERED ON
GENETICALLY MODIFIED AGRICULTURE PRODUCE

3437

SHRI SANTOSH BAGRODIA

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

- (a) the different edible agriculture produce which are genetically modified and approved by the Government to be produced in the country;
- (b) whether Government has conducted enough tests to ensure that they are not affecting the health of the innocent public; and
- (c) whether Government is aware that producers of such GM products are making huge profits at the cost of the health of the ordinary citizens?

ANSWER

MINISTER OF STATE (INDEPENDENT CHARGE) FOR ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS

(SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH)

(a) The Genetic Engineering Approval Committee (GEAC) in its meeting held on 14.10.2009 has concluded that Bt brinjal is safe for environmental release based on scientific facts data generated during 2002-2009 and international experience with GM crops. However, as the Ministry has received strong views both in favour and against commercialization of Bt brinjal in India from various stakeholders including the State Governments, farmers, civil societies, NGOs and scientists, the Ministry has decided to hold national consultations with the stakeholders before a final view on the environmental release of Bt brinjal is taken.

(b) On the issue of adverse impact on human health due to consumption of GM food, it may be noted the Government of India is following a policy of case by case approval of GM crops. Any company involved in the development of GM crops has to undertake extensive biosafety assessment which includes environmental safety as well as food and feed safety assessment even if it has been approved for commercial cultivation in other countries. The environmental safety assessment includes studies on pollen escape out- crossing, aggressiveness and weediness, effect of the gene on non-target organisms, presence of the 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 assessment studies include composition analysis, allergenicity and toxicological studies and feeding studies on fish, chicken, cows and buffaloes. In case the transgenic crop is found to be not suitable for 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.

(c) As of date Bt cotton is the only transgenic crop approved for commercial cultivation in India after extensive biosafety testing. 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.