GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY
DEPARTMENT OF BIOTECHNOLOGY

LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 1619
TO BE ANSWERED ON 09/12/2015

GM CROPS

1619. SHRI M.B. RAJESH :

Will the Minister of SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

विज्ञान और प्रौद्योगिकी मंत्री

(a) whether the Government intends to revamp the process of approval for GM crops;
(b) if so, the details thereof and the reasons therefor;
(c) the measures taken / proposed to be taken to make the process of approval stringent including strict supervision of field trials;
(d) whether the Government proposes to forbid the company intending to market the product by passing the tests; and
(e) if so, the details thereof and the other steps taken the Government in this regard?

ANSWER

MINISTER OF STATE FOR SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY AND EARTH SCIENCES
(Y. S. CHOWDARY)

विज्ञान और प्रौद्योगिकी तथा पृथ्वी विज्ञान राज्य मंत्री
(वाई. एस. चौधरी)

(a) & (b) Genetically Engineered (GE) crops undergo elaborate food and environmental safety assessment following regulatory guidelines and Standard Operating Procedures under Rules-1989 of Environment Protection Act, 1986. Proposals on examination by the Institutional Biosafety Committees (IBSc) are forwarded to Review Committee for Genetic Manipulation (RCGM) in Department of Biotechnology, Ministry of Science & Technology for a thorough food and environmental risk assessment before field trials being approved by Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee (GEAC) administered by Minister of Environment & Forests and Climate Change, GOI. Necessary follow-up action is being taken on various recommendations of the Supreme Court appointed Technical Committee and the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Agriculture on strengthening of regulatory framework such as setting up of Biosafety Support Unit (BSU) with scientists from various fields of agriculture and pharmaceutical sciences to develop Risk Assessment and Risk Management (RARM) plan before approval of all confined field trials of GE crops with new genes/ events; initiatives to notify regulatory testing sites, development of dedicated website for transparency in the biosafety regulatory system etc.

Cont.2/-

(c) A Central Compliance Committee (CCC) composing of experts nominated by RCGM and GEAC, experts from state agriculture universities and state agriculture departments make a site visit for monitoring the field trials at least two times during the important growth and reproductive stages of the crops. Monitoring is also done on a regular basis by scientists of the State Agricultural Universities and officials of State Agriculture Departments. Most of the trials are conducted in the premises of agriculture universities on obtaining No Objection Certificate (NOC) from the respective state governments. In the coming years, it is proposed to introduce video recording of the field trials in the presence of local agriculture officers at critical stages of growth for regulatory compliance.

(d) & (e) Development of GM Crops involves complex set of technologies which are often patented and with limited access. Commercial use of GM crops also requires various approvals under Rules 1989 of Environmental Protection Act 1986; Plant Quarantine Order, 2003; Seed Act, 1966 and its amendments thereof, and also Plant Variety Protection and Farmers Right (PVPFR) Act, 2001. As per the provisions of these Acts it is a punishable offence with fine and imprisonment including cancellation of registration of a company intending to market the product bypassing the tests.

*****