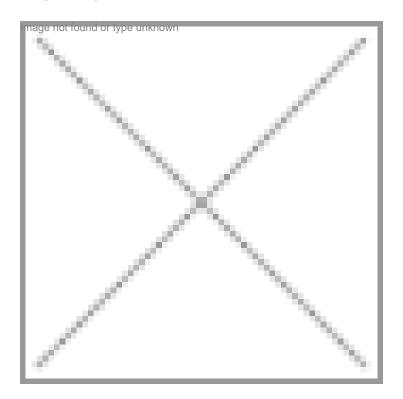


Bt cotton gets green signal in North India

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The March 4 meeting of the apex regulatory body, the Genetic Engineering Approval Committee (GEAC), saw the approval of six new varieties of transgenic cotton in the northern states of Punjab, Haryana and Rajasthan. This landmark decision of GEAC has paved way for commercial cultivation of transgenic cotton in these states for the first time.

These approved genetically modified Bt cotton hybrids, engineered to provide resistance against the American bollworm, are MRC-6301 and MRC-6304 of the Jalna-based Maharashtra Hybrid Seeds Company (Mahyco), RCH-134 and RCH-138 of the Coimbatore-based Rasi Seeds and Ankur-651 and Ankur-2534 of the Nagpur-based Ankur Seeds.

With this, the total tally of Bt cotton hybrids approved for cultivation has climbed up to ten. The first approval was granted in 2002 to three Bt cotton hybrids of Mahyco (Mech-162, Mech-184 and Mech-12) and last year, RCH-2, the Bt cotton variety of Rasi Seeds was given the green signal for cultivation in Central and Southern India.

nust seriously question this." • The renewal of the Bt cotton varieties being planted in

the southern parts of the county has been deferred to the cotton growing area in the northern zones is under illegal (or om the Punjab and Harvana state government as the farmers were being lured by the illegal cotton varieties. After long affic This is pelieved to be because of allegations from the eliberations of the pros and course of the technology, these varieties were cleared. Now the approval is expected to curb the local range and reduced the intensities and of the cultivation of rice and wheat in the northern region.

district of Andbra-Products and the GEA Subat asked the nittle e's decision and their mood is reflected in MG Ramasami, trials include two varieties each from Mahyco, Rasi Seeds,

Dverall, the industry believes that this is a positive step. As RK Sinha, executive director, All India Crop Biotechnology Association points out, "The crux of the matter is what the far<mark>m</mark>er needs. Till now in the northern region the farmers were just ot bothered about the legal status of the cotton seeds. They were going ahead and planting whatever seeds they could source - illegal or spurious varieties. So it is a good decision to provide them the legal seed, which brings them the support infrastructure of the companies." The fate of Bt cotton now will be determined by how these varieties will perform when they go to the fields. n

Rolly Dureha

he GEAC's decision has led to a wide range of reactions ranging from outright disapproval from some of the NGOs to /Tole fearted: Supporterion: Apprindus@rongantza(Gh&CSays Bhagirath Choudhary, national coordinator of International Berlyich meAcquisition of Accomplete the officeroing (ISAAA): It is a great news for the farmers in the northern part of India /blebisconsists/tofre;xamatorBstatesor/fou might remember that northern states like Punjab, Haryana and UP are the food askets of India. The first Green Revolution was ushered in India through the fields of these three states. We are happy that commercial cultivation เกเบล คอกซ้าสหา รุงสหาร and เอเลีย Leaf Virus (best available hybrids against CLV) in the northern parts". Hanaga and Bajastham The approvad salten variation all is absurd that before there is any review of the reported bad MBG-6361 and MMo5394 of Maby can Religible 36 aled Reliance of the refuge management requirement, the GEAC has gone <u> 1838 of Rasi Spects and Motaliefies and Purkub 25 and Purkub 25 and Rajasthan. There seems to be neither will nor capacity in the </u> BEACITS CONTROL the serious problem of illegal Bt varieties; their only interest seems to be in releasing new GM crops. One

pert GEAC meeting to be level believed 1 that the GEAC had received specific requests for the quick approval of Bt cotton

state 900 Girener, Rasiles eds re welcome this move and we are getting ready to place RCH 134 and RCH 138 variety eeds in the market by the first week of April. At present the demand for hybrid Bt cottonseeds is very high and I am not sure a color of the requirements. Now the farmers will have access to legal varieties. The merits of our hybrid been permitted in North India. The permitted varieties follows have een the requirements. So will have access to legal varieties. The merits of our hybrid been permitted in North India. The permitted varieties follows have been demonstrated last year bud. The permitted varieties follows have access to legal varieties. The merits of our hybrid we are equipped to cope up with the huge demand arising from the permitted last year bud.