

Scientists disagree with activists notion on GM crops

16 January 2015 | Features | By Rahul Koul Koul

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While activists have been questioning the use of GM crops by quoting various incidents where cattle had died after eating leaves of plants, the experts don't agree with such assertions. Besides that the scientists also refute accusations that the farmers have committed suicides due to BT Cotton.

During an open discussion in session 'Use of modern technology in agriculture', the Indian high profile agriculture scientists ruled out any role of GM cotton in causing suicides of farmers in Maharashtra's vidarbha region. These included Dr R S Paroda, former director general, Indian Council for Agriculture Research, Dr Anupam Verma, senior scientist, Indian Agriculture Research Institute and Dr Deepak Pental, former vice chancellor, Delhi University.

Requesting the central government to allowing more confined trials, these scientists in their talks mentioned about the need to have more data for research and analysis. At the same time the activists and certain sections of media are completely against any usage of GM crops. As per a source, it was highly visible during the debate.

Dr Deepak Pental asserted that there were research proposals that could make a huge difference to societal issues faced by the country but due to opposition by the activists, these got stalled. He said that it is important to allow the research to thrive. We have to take a decision whether to take this route or find alternatives."

Lamenting the policy paralysis, Dr R S Paroda reportedly told the gathering that India doubled cotton production and has reduced the load of pesticides. India is exporting cotton worth \$3 billion.

The recent mention of GM crops in the environmental report submitted by the former cabinet secretary, T S R Subramaniam has again renewed the debate on the GM issue. The note of caution in the report is being seen as a pressure point on the ministry of environment to hold back the decisions on the issue. However, it would be interesting to see whether the Modi government holds back its horses on allowing more field trials and removing the state level hiccups or gives it a thumbs up in

2015.