

GM tech requires caution: Subramanian committee report

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The committee headed by the former cabinet secretary, Mr TSR Subramanian in its report submitted to the government has sounded a note of caution as it mentioned that while utilizing science and technology their limitations as well as the need for appropriate human intervention should not be lost sight of.

"The potential consequences of mindless use of science and technology could possibly be illustrated by referring to the potential for medium/ long-term adverse affects through unprepared introduction of Genetically Modified (GM) food crops," the report that has been made official says.

While other ministries naturally would aggressively push for early field trials and induction, the role of the MoEF&CC may have to be one of being a Devil's Advocate to advise due caution. Noting that Europe does not permit field trials, and that the average Indian farm is of very small size (which could lead to severe adverse impact on biodiversity through gene-flow) also noting that there are no independent expert agencies in the country, perhaps the MoEF&CC may ask for greater assurance in respect of potential adverse effects in the medium and long run.

This is not to argue that use of science or technology should be limited; more to highlight the fact that appropriate caution needs to be taken.

The committee has recommended that the use of science and technology, wherever possible and appropriate should be encouraged; approval and enforcement agency should use latest technology to the maximum possible.

It remains to be seen how the government is going to responds to the recommendations by the committee.