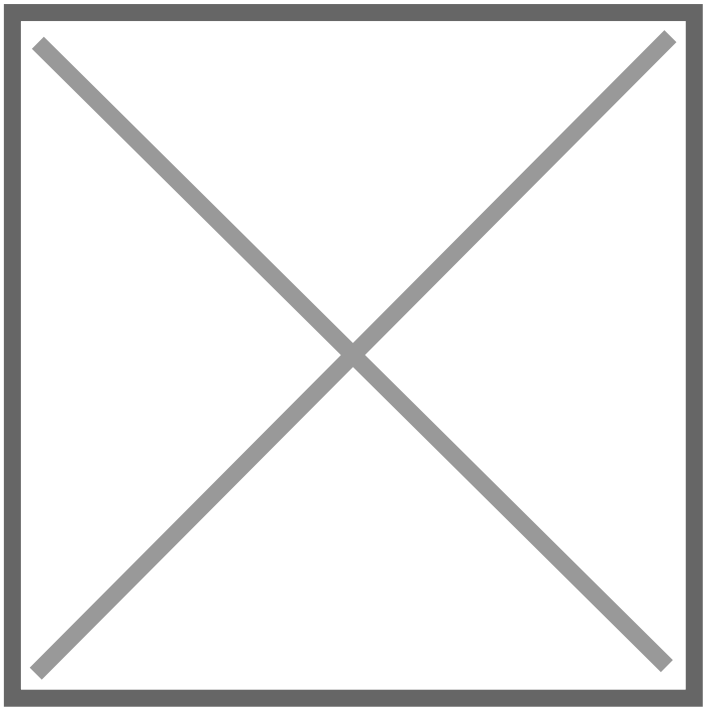
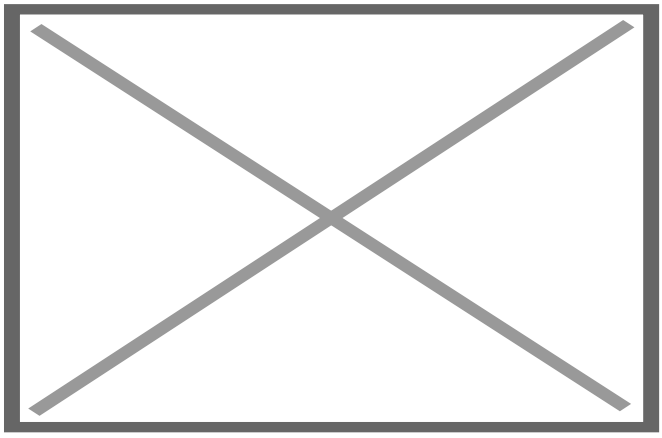
BioSpect
the business of Bi
24 years of leveraging the business of Bio
www.biospectrumindia.co

Jairam Ramesh exhorts scientists to play larger role in promoting BT

14 July 2006 | News



Jairam Ramesh exhorts scientists to play larger role in promoting BT



Union minister of state for commerce, Jairam Ramesh inaugurating the Agri Biotech Day on the concluding day of Bangalore Bio 2006.chairperson of the the Karnataka Vision Group on Biotechnology and Biocon CMD, Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw, Karnataka's IT and Biotechnology secretary, Dr Anup Pujari, DST secretary, Dr Ramaswamy and Dr KK Narayanan, president, ABLE and managing director, Metahelix Lifesciences look on.

Jairam Ramesh, Union minister of State for Commerce, has urged scientists and agri research institutions in the country to take a holistic approach towards Indian agriculture. The country has the tools, technology and potential, to mitigate and solve farmers' problems, he said.

Delivering his inaugural address at the Agri Biotech Day as part of Bangalore Bio 2006 at the JN Tata Auditorium in Bangalore on June 9, 2006, he said, "It is sad and ironic that farmers from prosperous states like Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra committed suicide due to absence of access to institutional credit and risk management mechanisms. The absence of regional rural banks forced the farmers to approach private money lenders. Moreover, the institutional sector was not geared to take up new technologies."

Talking about China's success in biotechnology, which is largely led by government funding and in India by private sector, he said, "Indian agri-biotech is different. It needs two locomotives. One in the front should be funded by public institutions and the

back funded by private sector. The absence of one without other will not lead us far. As long as private sector remains the driving force of the industry, I doubt the growth and its ability to make a difference to human aspects. The need of the hour is effective communication between the stakeholders to create public awareness and public-private partnership"

Cotton production

"There has been a significant increase in India's cotton production for the last five years as compared to previous five years," Jairam Ramesh said. "Gujarat, which accounts for one-third of the country's cotton production showed 18 percent increase and Punjab accounted for 20 to 25 percent production. Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh also showed improved results, while it declined in Karnataka and other states. The area under Bt cotton in India is still only 8 percent of total 8.5 million acres of cotton cultivation. It is too early to state that Bt cotton has swamped the country, but it must be said it has huge potential. Major disconnect between growers and the scientists due to various reasons must be overcome to increase adoption of Bt cotton cultivation by the growers," he said. "A good evaluation of cotton is going to be crucial to successful growth of biotechnology," he added.

Stating that cotton yield had increased from 330 kg per hectare to 470 kg per hectare in the last five years, he said the production had gone up from 167 lakh bales to 243 lakh bales.

Chairperson of the Karnataka Vision Group on Biotechnology and Biocon CMD, Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw said, "The agri sector faces several hurdles which have to be overcome if India has to move up from the current seventh position in the global biotech map. Though Bt cotton was approved in 2002, not even a single modified genetic crop was approved thereafter. We don't have soya, corn and other similar crops, which are being sowed in millions of hectares in other parts of the world. We need to speed up approvals for moving beyond Bt cotton and increase use of technology for crop produce. Nothing much has been done in biofuel as well. We must bear in mind that biotechnology can help in creating
alternate fuel."

Herbal park in Chhattisgarh

Chhattisgarh Minister of Forest, Revenue and Tourism, Brij Mohan Agarwal said that the state is setting up India's first herbal and medicinal park. The herbal park is being set up under public-private partnership model, for which the state has allotted 151 acres of land.

The state government will soon establish a biotechnology park in collaboration with the Biotech Consortium India Ltd, New Delhi. The minister also informed the gathering that Chhatisgarh had pioneered the use of biodiesel in the country and the state chief minister's official vehicle had been running on biofuel since April 2005.

Survey findings

As per the 4th BioSpectrum-ABLE Biotech Industry Survey which was released on the occasion, Biocon registered 6.44 percent growth, Serum Institute of India grew by 39.21 percent in FY06. The Top three companies are primarily in the BioPharma sector and accounted for a total business of Rs 1,829 crore. Panacea Biotec is the third largest company with biotech revenues of Rs 437.82 crore. The fourth (Mahyco Monsanto Biotech, Rs 391 crore), fifth (Rasi Seeds, Rs 309 crore) and eighth (Mahyco, Rs 117.76 crore) ranked companies are focused on the BioAgri segment. The three account for Rs 817.76 crore in revenues.

The biotech industry, which started to gain size in the 21st century, is still dependent on exports to get over half its revenue. In fact, the share of exports has increased marginally last year from 48.5 percent to 51.5 percent in 2005-06, accounting for Rs 3,357.17 crore (or $756 million). In many ways, biotech is mirroring the software industry. In fact, the BioServices sector, including clinical research and clinical trials, is predominantly dependent on foreign client who account for 95 percent of the industry revenues of Rs 720 crore. It also indicates that the introduction of the product patent regime has prompted big pharma to move a lot of clinical trials to take advantage of India's competitiveness.

BioPharma exports accounted for 74.33 percent of the total exports of Rs 3,357.17 crore, clocking Rs 2,495.24 crore in revenues. BioAgri's share of exports was the lowest at 1.07 percent and exports from this segment stood at Rs 35.88 crore. BioServices overseas revenues were Rs 684 crore. BioIndustrial and Bioinformatics sector accounted for 1.23 percent and 3 percent share of the total exports respectively.

That the biotech industry is research intensive is well known. This has been revalidated by the increasing investment levels (Rs 1,650 crore against Rs 1,215 crore in the previous year). The industry is investing 25.3 percent of its revenues into research and building infrastructure. The southern region as a whole continues to be second accounting for 36 percent of the industry revenues, while the West is the topper for the fourth year in a row with companies from the region totaling Rs 3,234.42 crore or 49.6 percent of the national biotech share.

Biocon Group with total sales of Rs 793 crore in 2005-06 was the No. 1 Group.This includes the sales revenues of group companies-Syngene, Clinigene and Biocon Biopharmaceuticals. The Serum Group is the No.2 group with sales of Rs 742 crore (Serum Institute and Serum International).

Â