

Modi endorses technology in agriculture, balanced view on GM

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As the election campaign unfolds, the churning of less discussed ideas and opinions too becomes a part of public deliberations. During his Chai pe Charcha event with farmers a village in Maharashtra's Yavatmal district, Mr Narendra Modi on March 20th was asked about his views on allowing GM crops to be cultivated in India. The Bharatiya Janta Party's (BJP) prime ministerial candidate who is tipped to head the next government, seemed to be in favor of allowing the technological interventions in agriculture.

"There were different opinions on GM technology. But Bt cotton immensely benefited farmers in Gujarat and even in some parts of Maharashtra. I am all for technology. We should not discard a technology that helps farmers; we must have faith in science. We must put technology and science to use, with regulations, and add value to produce," Mr Modi remarked.

This might sound interestingly optimistic to the industry but the road ahead still is not without contradictions as the difference of opinion seems to be emerging in the party over this issue. Earlier on March 9th, a group of close to 55 agriculture scientists, activists and groups opposing GM crops met Dr Murli Manohar Joshi, head of manifesto committee and argued against the crops. Dr Joshi reportedly assured them that the crops won't be allowed without rigorous biosafety assessment.

Meanwhile, high on leftist activism, Aam Aadmi Party has come out openly against the use of the technology. "On the one hand, scientific evidence and scientists voices on the adverse impacts of GM crops to human health and environment are increasing, and on the other experiences with BT cotton also show that the only entity that is benefiting from the introduction of GM crops are the big seed corporations which get monopolistic control over our seed sector," mentions the party's blog.

In this season of election euphoria, wait and watch seems to be the best course as of now.