

GM Crops: To or not to, govt undecided!

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Mr Joby Shekhar, assistant marketing manager, DuPont

"As per my understanding, the farmer spends on an average Rs 7,000 on pest control alone on per acre basis for crop protection products majorly for brinjal fruit and shoot borer alone. BT brinjal can provide solution in this regard in India as majority of farmers growing this crop are marginal farmers, with low land holding and their technical know-how is also very low. Though there are some wonderful products like coragen available in Indian market, all farmers may not have access to that technology due to various reasons. BT technology has proven beyond doubt about its usefulness. USA is the country which has very stringent environment regulations and the farmers in the US and Europe are using this technology to increase their productivity. In India we are seeing a lot of apprehension regarding this. But I personally believe that we should fully go ahead with all in-house trials, on-field trials, gather data of its environmental foot prints and leave it to the scientific community of our country to decide on that."

Mr Santosh Nair, CEO, Camson Bio Technologies

"Our Prime Minister is very bullish in terms of GM trials. He is more practical by looking at the results in terms of agriculture production. With the exploding

population number, our agriculture production needs to go up by 70 percent. The question is why the GM trials were stopped? In fact it had lot of politically motivated vested interests. GM crops get into trouble when a gene from an animal is introduced into the plant kingdom. Today 95 percent of cotton that we grow in our country is Bt Cotton. In our country farmers want to see the benefits of cost and yield before they adopt a new method. They want to see it to believe it. This is a trend that is catching up."

Dr M Ramasami, chairman, Rasi Seeds

"Currently, there is good indication on allowing GM seeds and transgenic crops in India but more clarity should emerge. We expect a fair and positive consideration of GM crops development with desirable agronomic traits in food crops such as rice. It will be a great advantageous for Indian farmers. Now our major strategy will be to introduce, for the benefit of Indian farmers, hybrids for food crop such as rice for insect pest resistance, yield enhancement, drought tolerance and nitrogen use efficiency. Cotton has been a very good example of adoption of biotech crop in India. Realizing the benefits, the cotton farmers have adopted GM technology that resulted in adoption of more than 95 percent of area under cotton in India within a span of 10 years, the production is more than doubled. A similar trend can be expected of other GM crops when it is allowed in our country. Rasi Seeds has been engaged in GM crop research for the past six years. We are optimistic to move forward in developing different crops with the encouraging support of the government. We have comparable and excellent capabilities in production of GM crops similar to world scientific community. We will also seek the collaboration of National and International agencies for desirable and viable technologies for GM crop development."

Dr KC Ravi, vice president, Commercial Acceptance and Public Policy for South Asia, Syngenta

"We are happy that the "Made in India" campaign mentions Biotechnology as one of the key sectors and the emphasis on GM hybrids is welcome. Farming in India is getting complex and the farmers need all technologies including GM to combat the various abiotic stresses and climate change issues. India has immensely gained with the introduction of Bt Cotton hybrids and from a net importer the country is today a net exporter and is on the verge of becoming the second largest producer of cotton. As challenges of food security, shrinking land and water shortage loom large, we need to help our farmers address the challenges of retaining and enhancing their yields and income."