

Agriculture minister bats for GM crops

16 February 2015 | News | By BioSpectrum Bureau

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"Apart from increased productivity to produce more from less input including water and land, the losses that occur due to droughts, floods, salinity, biotic and other abiotic stresses also need to be eliminated decisively through the adoption of appropriate technologies. In this context, genetic engineering holds great promise." This was stated by the union agriculture minister, Mr Radha Mohan Singh while speaking on the occasion of inauguration of India Seed Congress-2015 at Agra on February 13, 2015.

Mr Singh emphasized that increase in farmers' income and quality food supply to consumers at affordable prices are closely linked to supply of quality seeds with all the required traits for substantial increase in productivity. "Bt cotton in Gujarat and other states like Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu has clearly demonstrated what these new technologies can do to enhance farmer incomes with consequential effects on their well-being. Besides, newer technologies like herbicide tolerance, drought tolerance, nitrogen use efficiency, healthy oils and feed, and nutrition enhancement, can, when introduced commercially in India, substantially increase productivity leading to greater farmer incomes and farmer well-being," he said.

The minister mentioned that international institutional collaborations both in public and private sector are essential to introduce innovations and technologies to the farmers. However such arrangements should benefit all the stakeholders and faster technology diffusion and adoption can happen only if there is a rational regime for technology pricing and licensing which enables a level playing field and also fosters healthy competition, he said.

Mr Singh emphasised that the superior genetics encapsulated in seed combined with improved agronomies shall be the key strategy to break the yield barriers. He said that in this direction the private organized seed industry has significantly contributed and successfully complemented with the public sector. Government shall therefore support PPP initiatives for overall development of the sector, he said.

Mr Singh said that a substantial increase in productivity is the answer to achieve food security in an efficient and sustainable manner,he said.

Mr Singh further added that while agriculture feeds the nation, seeds feed agriculture. Seeds are a critical determinant of productivity in agriculture. By embedding various types of values, like health enhancing benefits, crop protection and water and soil nutrients to resist adverse climatic conditions, a seed is eminently suited to increase productivity. Thus, appropriate policy support for seed improvements through conventional and biotech methods, in combination with improved agronomic practices, would greatly help in ensuring food and nutritional security of the country, he said.