

## Maharashtra withdraws permission to GM crop trials, ABLE-AG protests

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After Maharashtra government's much appreciated move earlier this year, the confined field trials for 18 genetically modified events including rice, brinjal, cotton and chickpea have been put on hold for now by the state. In a letter to the concerned companies, the state has asked them to stop the field trials until further notice.

Terming the decision of the state government as unfortunate, Dr Ram Kaundinya, chairman, Association of Biotechnology Led Enterprises-Agriculture Group (ABLE-AG) turned to Twitter to express his dismay. "Withdrawing permission for GM field trials by Maharashtra Government based on objections by some organizations is unfortunate & unscientific," he tweeted.

It is important to note that the seed sowing season is approaching fast and delay to allow field trials could linger on in case of indecisiveness on the issue. The decision apparently has been taken after a meeting of members of civil society and few non-governmental organizations met the chief minister of the state, Mr Devinder Fadnavis. The letter issued to companies mentioned that the government has decided to put forth all the objections before the committee constituted under the chairmanship of Dr Anil Kakodkar. "All the objections raised will be reviewed and scrutinised and report submitted to the government. Till that time confined research field trials should not be started, it said.

The decision on allowing of trials again is expected to be taken after the proposed meeting between Mr Kakodkar and activists is over. No date has been communicated yet on the said meeting. Given the fact that the state government is walking a tightrope over its no objection certificate to GM crops, the issue doesn't seem to be getting over any sooner.