

An effort to bust myths of Transgenic Technology

09 January 2014 | News

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The discussion was presided and moderated by Padmashree Awardee Dr M Mahadevappa, director, JSS Rural Development Foundation, Mysore and Ex-Vice Chancellor, UAS, Dharwad.

The panel members included, Dr B Sesikeran, former director, National Institute of Nutrition (NIN), Hyderabad; Dr K K Narayanan, MD, Metahelix Life Science, Bangalore; Dr Ashwath c, head of division, IIHR, Bangalore; Dr T M Manjunath, consultant, agri-biotechnology and integrated pest management, Bangalore, Dr P H Ramanjini Gowda, professor of biotechnology, GKVK and others.

The welcome note was delivered by Dr M A Shankar, director of research, UAS, GKVK, Bangalore.

Dr Sesikeran said that genetic modification has been happening in the nature for a long time. "There are lot of genes moving from one plant to another and from people to people. Now through Science, humans can specifically pick out a gene from one source and put it in another one for our own advantage."

He further added stating that when a technology is introduced, we need to find out its potential for the society and run a risk-benefit analysis. "We need to check how beneficial it'd be to our farmers and the possible harm it might cause to humans, animals and the environment," he said.

He concluded by saying that, "If we are not allowed to grow the crops for testing in the fields, we can never do the testing, and we'll never get the answers regarding the safety of this transgenic technology."

Dr K K Narayanan in his talk explained that transgenic technology offers food safety, environment safety and economically viable for the farmers.

"My only appeal is that you (media) are an important mediator between the technology developers and the general public. Unfortunately, there is a lot of misinformation which is being spread. My request is please investigate and question the wrong claims. What is useful for our country's economy is unnecessarily delayed," he said.

"Transgenic technology also created a revolution in the area of producing hormones, anti-cancer drugs, antibiotics and vaccines," added Dr Sesikera while talking to *BioSpectrum India* about the applications of the technology in the pharma industry.

Dr Narayanan quoted that activists are preventing such technology from reaching the right people, terming it to be a 'criminal act'.

He opined, "This is happening because of misinformation that is being circulated. It is important to present both the sides of the story. I encourage the media to propagate the right message to the public so that the right environment can be created for the responsible introduction of this technologies which will benefit our society and economy and the country and the world at large."

As a concluding remarks, Dr Mahadevappa said, "There is enormous scope for the secondary agriculture to take off and help farmers especially in the rural community. The media's role here is very important to make a difference and to create scientific awareness and clarify the doubts among people about this technology, by projecting it appropriately."