

CNRI bats for GM crops to combat climate change

Press Trust of India | New Delhi June 04, 2015 Last Updated at 17:32 IST

Pitching for GM crops for combating challenges of climate change, Confederation of NGOs of Rural India (CNRI) today demanded that the government act fast on allowing genetically engineering (GE) technology in crops other than cotton.

It urged the states like Gujarat, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal and Rajasthan to permit field trials of genetically modified (GM) crops to generate relevant scientific data.

CNRI also said that organisations like Bharatiya Kisan Sangh and Swadeshi Jagaran Manch should create a consensus among stakeholders on the issue of allowing genetic engineering technology in the agriculture sector.

"...Accelerate GE technology for farmers and agriculture and make it a priority focus area to help combat disease, pests and climate change challenges in India," Confederation of NGOs of Rural India (CNRI) urged the government on eve of the World Environment Day.

Highlighting the findings of a survey conducted in 10 states, CNRI National President Raghupati Singh said that in addition to poor irrigation and limited access to bank credit, the biggest concern expressed by farmers was lack of quality seeds including genetically modified ones.

Asserting that farmers need technological help to combat the ill-effects of climate change, Singh said in a statement that farmers want "the success of Bt cotton replicated with other crops and have them genetically modified (GM) to combat the challenges of climate change."

"The application of genetic engineering in agriculture will lead to higher yields and assured supply and result in consumers benefitting through reduced or stable prices for agricultural products," he said, adding that the government should enhance the agri-economy by giving farmers access to new genetically engineered seeds.

On field trials of GM crops, CNRI said it would give a "clarion call to the governments of Gujarat, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal and Rajasthan to allow field trials of GM crops to generate relevant scientific data so that ill-conceived myths around the safety of GM crops can be busted."

CNRI conducted survey in 10 states -- Bihar, West Bengal, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Punjab, Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh and Karnataka.

The government has so far permitted commercial cultivation of BT cotton but imposed moratorium on commercial release of Bt brinjal in February 2010 due to concerns aired by green activists.

Maharashtra, Punjab, Haryana, Delhi and Andhra Pradesh have given no objection certificate (NOCs) for field trials of some biotech crops, while states like Rajasthan have banned such research activities.