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Scientists to Submit GM Mustard Report to Govt Soon

Reuters

NEW DELHI Indian scientists have completed final trials of a genetically modified (GM) variety of mustard and will submit a report to the government in a month, hoping to win over stiff opposition to make it the country's first commercial transgenic food crop.

A powerful farmers' group, close to PM Narendra Modi's BJP, is one of the biggest critics of GM crops and wants the

government to stop all field trials saying they "will destroy the entire agrarian economy". Allowing GM crops is critical to Modi's goal of boosting farm productivity in India, where urbanisation is devouring arable land and population growth will mean there are 1.5 billion mouths to be fed by 2030—even more than China. India imports about 60% of its edible oil needs at an annual cost of up to \$10 billion, its third-biggest import item after crude oil and gold.

The new genetically modified mustard

offers India a chance to substantially reduce this import bill as it would be the highest-yielding oilseed in India, with yields 26-34% higher than the national average, said Delhi University's Deepak Pental, leading the research on the GM mustard. Pental said the recently-concluded biosafety studies did not show any adverse allergenic, toxic or environmental impact. "Oil and rapeseed meal of transgenic rapeseed have been consumed very extensively from 1996 onwards (outside India)," Pental said.