



## No scientific evidence to prove that GM crops harm soil and human health: govt

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There is no scientific evidence to prove that Genetically Modified crops would harm soil, human health and environment, Indian Government has informed the parliament.

Environment Minister Prakash Javadekar's response came to queries in Rajya Sabha (Upper House of parliament) over the recent controversial decision of biotech regulator — the Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee's (GEAC) — granting approval for experimental field trials of 12 GM crops for the purpose of generating biosafety data.

The 12 crops ready for field trials include cotton, rice, castor, wheat, maize, groundnut, potato, sorghum, brinjal, mustard, sugarcane and chickpea.

Javadekar said GM crops particularly GM corn, canola, soybean and cotton are being cultivated and consumed by human beings as well as animals in many countries the world over as food, feed and processed products.

"There is no scientific evidence to prove that GM crops would harm soil, human health and environment," he said in a written reply in the Rajya Sabha.

"GM crops have beneficial traits such as insect resistance and herbicide tolerance, stress tolerance, fungal resistance, disease resistance, salt tolerance, drought tolerance, enhance yield and nutrition etc. that may help in food security" Javadekar said.

He said in view of various concerns related to the safety, efficacy and agronomic performance of transgenic seeds, extensive evaluation and regulatory approval process takes place before any GM plant is approved for commercial cultivation.

The Minister's statement came even as two RSS linked outfits have sought a ban on field trials of genetically-modified crops, cleared by the GEAC.

Representatives of Swadeshi Jagran Manch and Bhartiya Kissan Sangh had met Javadekar in July after the GEAC had cleared proposals for confined field trials of rice, brinjal, chickpea, mustard and cotton.

The Manch and Sangh members had told the Minister that it is "not advisable" to allow GM Crops without proper scientific evaluation about their probable long term impact on human health and soil.

Last week, Javadekar had informed the Lok Sabha that there is no ban on GM crop field trials either by the Government or the Supreme Court.

Meanwhile, Association of Biotechnology Led Enterprises (Agriculture group) has said "the entire ecosystem that supports agri-biotechnology including agriculture universities, scientists, researchers, farmers and seed manufacturers,"

"Accepting modern technologies on scientific grounds sets a good precedent that fosters research and innovation to help improve and ensure India's food security, while also allowing Indian farmers the right to choose," Ram Kaundinya, Director General, ABLE-AG said in a statement.