

# Business Standard

## GEAC gives GM mustard developer a hearing at first meeting

Biotechnology regulator GEAC, at its first meeting today, discussed the much-debated genetically modified (GM) mustard seed and heard views of the technology developer Deepak Pental, a scientist at the [Delhi University](#).

The Environment Ministry has received a proposal for commercial cultivation of a GM hybrid variety of the mustard plant developed by the university's Centre for Genetic Manipulation of Crop Plants (CGMCP).

"Dr Pental made a presentation on GM mustard. Members raised some queries on methodology and other environmental issues. It was an initial discussion," said a senior government official, a member of the Genetic Engineering Approval Committee (GEAC), after the meeting.

Hoping to get green clearance for GM mustard, Pental said, "I am happy that they convened a meeting and gave us a chance to explain. There must be some seriousness that they invited us. This was the first meeting. There was a lot of interaction."

He termed it as "a good session". "We informed that GM mustard has potential to increase crop yield by 20-30 per cent. I believe we answered them satisfactorily. Let's see what they do," he said, adding that India also needs to fly the flag of technology.

"As a developer, I look forward to a positive decision as the technology is for the benefit of farmers."

Already, there is stiff opposition by NGOs against GM mustard as former Union health minister Anbumani Ramadoss and several farmer groups such as Bhartiya Kisan Union have made representation to the government opposing GM mustard.

India's rapeseed-mustard seed production was 63.09 lakh tonnes in 2014-15 crop year (July-June).

This is the first proposal that has come up before the NDA government after the previous government had put a moratorium on commercial cultivation of Bt Brinjal in 2010. Currently, Bt cotton is the only GM crop allowed for commercial cultivation.