

"GM crop is essential for India"

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Prakash Javadekar, *Minister of State (Independent Charge) Environment, Forest & Climate Change, Government of India*, spoke on government's stand on field trials and other issues on GM crops in an interview with NuFFooDS Spectrum.

August last year the Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee (GEAC), an apex body constituted in the Ministry of Environment and Forests that is authorised to approve the use of genetically modified (GM) crops or organisms in the country, has given green signal for field trials of GM rice, mustard, cotton, chickpea and brinjal. The agency has also given approval to import refined soybean oil derived from transgenic soybean by three company's viz. Bayer Bio-Sciences, Gurgaon, BASF India and Monsanto Holdings.

After more than a year, under the leadership of Prakash Javadekar, the Ministry of Environment and Forests, has called a meeting of the GEAC in September to decide on field trials for a number of GM crops. In an interview with NuFFooDS Spectrum **Prakash Javadekar, Minister of State (Independent Charge) Environment, Forest & Climate Change, Government of India**, spoke on government's stand on field trials and other issues on GM crops.

What is the current status of GM crop trials?

On receiving the application for field trials we strictly scrutinise safety of trials because safety matters a lot. When we are trying something new, which was not in existence, that must go through the complete safety regime. Therefore after due diligence and successful lab tests applications are considered and allowed for field trials.

After successful commercialisation of Bt cotton in India why other crops are not allowed for commercialisation as farmers are already growing them in other countries?

About 80% farmers have adopted Bt cotton in the country and it is giving results. Finally it is the farmers who are the deciding factors.

On one hand the Ministry of Science and Technology, Agriculture Ministry, and other departments have been supporting biotechnology, fortification of foods. On other side Ministry of Environment and Forest is not allowing field trials of GM crops and not allowing release of the crops. What is the rationale behind such dual action from the government?

We believe that science cannot be stopped. Science must evolve, science must progress and we must not stop experimenting. So our policy is that we continue experimenting with proper safety regime.