

Encouraging GM food crops only way out for India: K V Thomas

KOCHI: With the government deciding to roll out the food security law, former Food Minister and senior Congress MP [K V Thomas](#) today said encouraging Genetically Modified (GM) crops is the only way the country can feed its growing population.

Thomas, who piloted the [National Food Security Bill](#) in Parliament before it became law during his tenure in the Food Ministry in 2013, slammed environmentalists for opposing GM food, citing "flimsy reasons".

"We don't have a way out. We should not unnecessarily oppose GM without any scientific reasons. How are you going to feed such a huge population? That is the big question. Our production and productivity is slow," Thomas told PTI.

The senior leader's support to GM crops is expected to kick up a debate in Congress, as many of his party colleagues, including former Environment Minister [Jairam Ramesh](#), are its strong opponents.

"If a discussion takes place in my party, definitely I will put forward my argument. Every country is doing it. China has GM wheat. It has already come to India. I do not look at it negatively," he said.

To a question on whether the government is facing stiff opposition from some RSS-linked groups in taking a decision in favour of GM crops, he said, "I am not taking any political angle."

"I am also a Chemistry professor. I am looking at it with the angle of a scientist. It took years for them to come out with a successful product. And without any base, some people just oppose it," he said.

Thomas, who is also the chairman of Public Accounts Committee, said he as a parliamentarian supports GM food, but favoured an awareness campaign to clear whatever doubts people have about it.

"Some of our environmentalists, some groups... they are opposing without any scientific reasons," Thomas said.

Observing that the presence of seed giants like Monsanto is the reason for opposition from certain quarters, he said India should utilise its facilities like [Indian Council of Agricultural Research \(ICAR\)](#) to carry out research and experiments in the area.

"We have got eminent scientists. Make use of their services," he said.

His remarks come days after Food Minister [Ram Vilas Paswan](#) said the National Food Security Law would be implemented in all states and Union Territories, barring Tamil Nadu, by April this year.

Till now, 25 states and Union territories have rolled out the law while 11 are in the process of doing so, he had said.

The law was passed by Parliament in 2013 and state governments were given one year to implement it.