

## SWADESHI JAGRAN MANCH OPPOSES LOCALLY DEVELOPED SEED

## Swadeshi Test for GM Mustard

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**New Delhi:** A locally developed variety of genetically modified (GM) mustard seed is not swadeshi enough for the Swadeshi Jagran Manch, which is ready to launch an agitation against it, saying the genetic material was developed by Bayer and the government is being misguided about its safety and benefits.

Deepak Pental, the scientist who led the effort to develop the GM mustard seed, is confident that it will be approved, although for the moment, the Supreme Court has asked the Centre to seek public opinion before taking any step to launch it.

Ashwani Mahajan, co-convenor of the Swadeshi Jagran Manch, is staunchly opposing it. "The Prime Minister and the government are being misguided on the issue. It is very clear that the herbicide-tolerant Mustard DMH 11 variety is not swadeshi, does not lead to increase in yield and no right procedure has been followed to assess its impact on human health," he said.

He said his organisation has



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written to Prime Minister Narendra Modi cautioning him against undue haste in granting permission to GM mustard. Mahajan said that the general feeling in the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh was against GM.

"You may question us on why we differ from the BJP. We compliment the government on the direct benefit transfer scheme for farmers, Jan-Dhan Yojana, Ujjwala Yojana, Mudra Yojana and others, but where we feel it is not in the interest of the farmer, consumer or country – as is in the case of GM or FDI in food proces-

sing and marketing of agriculture produce – we will object," he said.

Pental is pinning his hopes on Modi. "He wants India to be economically prosperous. Without science and technology, it can't happen. Once, on DD Kisan, he said that we need GM crops. I am sure they will clear it," he said.

Pental said it was wrong to say that the genetic material belonged to Bayer. "Initially, they (genes) belonged to Bayer, but these genes were never patented in India. So patents are territorial and there are no patents for the-

se three genes in India. Their (Bayer) patents have also lapsed as they are 20 years old, wherever they had patented. We changed the method for using these genes and we have patents to use them in the US and Canada," he said.

The Centre for Genetic Manipulation of Crop Plants at the University of Delhi, with support from the government's Department of Biotechnology and the National Dairy Development Board, were involved in developing the GM mustard seed.

Pental said India's mustard yi-

eld should increase to at least 2 tonnes per hectare in the next 10 years from 1.2 tonnes. "This will require productive hybrids, yield stabilisation through developing disease-resistant varieties and hybrids and improvement in oil and meal quality for value addition," he said.

Mahajan said yields can rise without GM seeds. "This kharif season we are looking at a record pulses and oilseed production. Is it because of GM varieties? No. It is because our farmers toiled hard, the weather was conducive and the government ensured a good minimum support price," said Mahajan, adding that Make in India by India rather than foreign direct investment was a good step taken by the BJP to help in the growth of the country.

Mahajan said the Congress had no moral standing to speak on GM as it had allowed field trials of 120 GM food crops.

"Chief minister of Bihar Nitish Kumar and the Kerala government have supported us. We are hearing some ministers from Samajwadi Party too opposing GM mustard," he said.