

Use technology in agriculture, but be mindful of biodiversity: Modi

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Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Sunday that while the agriculture sector should use technology to fight malnutrition and hunger, it should not be at the cost of sustainability and compromising the country's biodiversity.

Addressing the International Agrobiodiversity Congress in the national capital on Sunday, Modi said the world community needs to develop a system where all rules related to agro-biodiversity is harmonised. He also called upon the scientists from the Indian Council of Agricultural Research and others to expand the ambit of their research so that plant and animal varieties, which are helpful to farmers, could be publicised across the country.

"Despite most countries accepting the international biodiversity convention,



Prime Minister Narendra Modi speaks at the inaugural ceremony of first International Agrobiodiversity Congress 2016 in New Delhi on Sunday

PHOTO: PTI

almost 50-150 species of plants, animals and marine resources are getting extinct every day," Modi noted.

Recently, a panel under the Genetic Engineering and Appraisal Committee had given a favourable ruling on GM mustard, opening the

door for its commercialisation in the country.

The move has sparked intense debate within the country with right-wing organisations such as the Swadeshi Jagran Manch, along with prominent civil society organisations, criticising the approval.

One major argument of these organisations is that once GM mustard is commercialised, it will lead to wiping off all indigenous mustard varieties.

The honeybee industry has also opposed GM mustard on the ground that it would kill honeybees and also the livelihood of millions of growers as mustard is a main crop for bees.

Modi had also said in his speech that research has shown that extensive use of pesticides in crops would destroy honeybee colonies, for which proper analysis should be done to understand which are beneficial insects and which are harmful. "We have till now managed to register 160 animal species, but our biodiversity reserve is much larger than this and, hence, research should be done to register more species," the Prime Minister said.

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