

# Niti Aayog turns a deaf ear to RSS arm, bats for GM crop

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**N**EW DELHI: Niti Aayog has strongly advocated wider use of genetically modified (GM) seed varieties to revive agriculture growth in the country. The assertion came even after RSS's economic wing — Swadeshi Jagran Manch — questioned the role and two-year contribution of Niti Aayog and raised serious questions about the think tank supporting use of GM seeds.

Arguing that the key to green revolution was highyielding crops, the government's think tank said, "It is time for us to return to allow massive research into improving seed varieties including genetically modified one." In an appraisal document of 12th Five Year Plan, the Aayog said, "Elsewhere in the world, most notably the United States, GMO seeds have

been in use for over two decades with no adverse effect on either crops or those consuming the product of those seeds."

"China has been far ahead of us in this regard. Our own experience with BT Cotton has been a success," it said.

In the paper, the Aayog outlined several policy interventions to bring back agriculture to a higher growth trajectory, which included need to shift towards high-value commodities such as horticulture, fisheries and livestock, reforming land-leasing laws and reforming the agriculture produce marketing committees (APMCs).

The review of the 12th Plan period (2012-17) is not of much use for the economy as the government has decided to come out with a new 15-year vision document and three-year action plan that is being prepared by Niti Aayog.

In two months, the Aayog will come out with a three-year action plan with a view to accelerate economic growth and make it more inclusive by focusing on the health sector. The action plan will also take into account the impact of demonetisation on the economy, especially on the informal sector. The action plan will also have forecast for revenue projection and suggested expenditure for broad heads of development.