

Clearance to GM varieties

1115. SHRI S. ANBALAGAN: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government proposes to clear several genetically modified varieties of vegetables and cereals such as rice;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether Government are aware of the concerns being expressed by scientists/experts that GM vegetables/cereals may cause long term effects on human beings; and

(d) if so, the details thereof and the steps being taken/proposed to be taken thereon?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH): (a) and (b) The Genetic Engineering Approval Committee the apex body notified under the 'Rules for Manufacture, Use, Import, Export and Storage of Hazardous Micro Organisms/Genetically Engineered Organisms or Cells 1989' of the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986, has accorded approval for conducting genetic engineering tests on Genetically Modified (GM) crops namely; cotton, rice, okra, brinjal, potato, groundnut, tomato, corn, cabbage, cauliflower, mustard and sorghum for generation of biosafety data.

(c) and (d) The Government of India is following a policy of case by case approval of GM crops. In view of various concerns related to the safety, efficacy and agronomic performance of transgenic seeds, extensive evaluation and regulatory approval process takes place before any GM crop is approved for commercial cultivation. This includes generation of relevant biosafety information and its elaborate analysis to ensure food, feed and environmental safety. The environmental safety assessment includes studies on pollen escape out-crossing, aggressiveness and weediness, effect of the gene on non-target organisms, presence of protein in soil and its effect on soil micro-flora, confirmation of the absence of terminator gene and baseline susceptibility studies. The food and feed safety studies include assessment on composition analysis, allergenicity and toxicological studies and feeding studies on fish, chicken, cows and buffaloes. In case, the transgenic crop is not found suitable for release in the environment or human consumption, the product is rejected during the trial stage itself. A final view on the commercialization of GM plants is taken only when scientific studies establish that it is safe from the point of view of its long term impacts on human health and environment.

Protection of forest in Uttarakhand

1116. SHRI BHAGAT SINGH KOSHYARI: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state: