

Permission for cultivation of genetically modified crops

‡2829. SHRI UPENDRA KUSHWAHA: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the permission for cultivation of genetically modified crops has been given to farmers of the country since 1995;

(b) whether it is also a fact that farmers producing genetically modified crops are getting adversely affected due to the said cultivation;

(c) whether scientists have not carried out an indepth study on adverse impact of genetically modified products on coming generation; and

(d) if the answers to the said questions are in affirmative, the rationale behind allowing to produce genetically modified crops?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH): (a) No permission for cultivation of genetically modified crops has been given to farmers of the country since 1995. Bt. Cotton Crop has been approved for commercial cultivation in the country only in Kharif 2002.

(b) The Central Institute for Cotton Research (CICR), Nagpur has been conducting detailed studies at State level in collaboration with the State Agricultural Universities of the nine cotton growing States. Information so far collected indicates that: (i) production has increased in all the cotton growing States with the introduction of Bt. Cotton; (ii) bollworm menace in cotton has significantly reduced all over the country; and (iii) there is a reduction in market share of insecticides used in Cotton. The area under Bt. Cotton has increased to 80.00 lakh hectare (estimated) in 2009-10 as compared to 0.29 lakh hectare in 2002-03.

(c) and (d) In view of various concerns related to the safety, efficacy and agronomic performance of transgenic seeds, the Government of India is assessing the merits and demerits of each GM crop on a case by case basis even if it is approved for cultivation in other countries. Before any GM crop is approved for commercial cultivation, extensive evaluation and regulatory approval process takes place. 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

‡Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

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 for the human health and environment. Further, all GM crops approved for commercial cultivation has to undergo post release surveillance to monitor the safety and efficacy of the new trait introduced in the GM crop.

Clearance of Hydel projects in Arunachal Pradesh

2830. SHRI PRAKASH JAVADEKAR: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

- (a) whether it is a fact that the Ministry has asked for moratorium on clearance for hydel projects in Arunachal Pradesh;
- (b) if so, the details thereof and the reasons therefor; and
- (c) what is Government doing in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH): (a) No, Sir.

- (b) and (c) Does not arise, in view of the reply to part (a) above.

Clearance to mining projects in Maharashtra's Eco-sensitive zone

2831. SHRI PRAKASH JAVADEKAR: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

- (a) whether it is a fact that Maharashtra Government has recently approved some mining projects which fall in most eco-sensitive zone of the State;
- (b) if so, the details thereof; and
- (c) what Government is doing in this regard to protect the green cover?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH): (a) to (c) The information is being collected from the State Government and the same will be laid on the Table of the House.

Cremation of dead bodies at ghats

2832. SHRI MANGALA KISAN: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

- (a) whether Government is aware that the dead bodies are cremated at ghats of rivers across the country, thereby causing pollution in the rivers;
- (b) if so, the details thereof, river-wise and State-wise;
- (c) whether Government proposes to construct electric crematorium along the