

Pollution Control Board(CPCB), concerned State Pollution Control Boards/ Pollution Control Committees for UTs in 16 metropolitan cities. A few more continuous stations are being operated in towns like Rohtak, Jharia, Solapur, Panchkula, etc.

On the basis of review of literature, ambient air quality monitoring, National Ambient Air Quality Standards, etc a concept of Air Quality Index (AQI) has been developed by the Central Pollution Control Board. It is posted on CPCB website for comments. CPCB has undertaken the task of finalizing AQI.

(c) and (d) The data on ambient air under National Air Monitoring Programme (NAMP) is received in CPCB which is collated, compiled and published by CPCB. Data from continuous stations is also received in Central Pollution Control Board. Increasing the number of stations for air monitoring is a regular activity.

Caution on GM crops

1619. DR. T.N. SEEMA : Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT, FORESTS AND CLIMATE CHANGE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government-appointed High Level Committee (HLC) to review environmental laws has reported a note of caution on medium/long-term adverse affects through unprepared introduction of Genetically Modified (GM) food crops;

(b) if so, the details and the reaction of Government thereto; and

(c) whether a Committee of technical experts comprising scientists form public research laboratories and academic institutions set up by the Supreme Court, said no to herbicide tolerant crops on the ground that they would exert a highly adverse impact over time on sustainable agriculture, rural livelihood and environment and if so, the reaction of Government thereto ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FORESTS AND CLIMATE CHANGE (SHRI PRAKASH JAVADEKAR) : (a) The High Level Committee (HLC) under the chairmanship of Shri T.S.R. Subramanian, Former Cabinet Secretary, has made a note of caution that while utilizing science and technology for the introduction of genetically modified crops, their limitations as well as the potential consequences should not be lost sight off. This is not to argue that use of science or technology should be limited, more to highlight the fact that appropriate caution needs to be taken. Further, the Committee recommended that the use of science and technology, wherever possible and appropriate should be encouraged; approval and enforcement agency should use latest technology to the maximum possible.

(b) GoI is of the view that regulation is a dynamic process. The Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee (GEAC) comprising of eminent multi-disciplinary experts is following a case-by-case approval of GM crops. The biosafety assessments and protocols for generating biosafety data and conduct of confined experimental field trials Rules 1989 have been developed through a consultative approach and following the international norms prescribed by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), CODEX Alimentarius Commission and International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) and is regularly updated.

(c) The Technical Expert Committee (TEC) constituted *vide* Hon'ble Supreme Court Order dated 10.5.2012 in the matter of Writ Petition (Civil) No. 260/2005, has recommended that herbicide tolerant (HT) crop is not suitable for Indian agriculture. In this regard it is to state that all HT crops undergo elaborate biosafety studies for its impact on human and animal health and environment following regulatory guidelines and SOPs under Rules 1989 of EPA 1986 and only those HT crops which are found to be safe for human/animal consumption as well beneficial to Indian farmers will be approved for commercial release. So far no HT crop has been approved by regulatory agencies for commercial release.

Reasons for erosion and dwindling of forest area

†1620. DR. VIJAYLAXMI SADHO : Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT, FORESTS AND CLIMATE CHANGE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the main reasons behind the occurrence of cyclones and natural disasters are the erosion and dwindling of forest area and water and air pollution which causes scanty rainfall thereby leading to droughts;

(b) whether any detailed study and research have been conducted on this subject, if so, the details thereof and the action taken by Government in this regard;

(c) to what extent the National Forestry Action Programme is proving helpful in increasing the forest cover in the country; and

(d) if so, the forest area increased during the last three years, the year-wise and State-wise details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FORESTS AND CLIMATE CHANGE (SHRI PRAKASH JAVADEKAR) : (a) No report detailing the link between the occurrence of cyclones and natural disasters and erosion and dwindling of forest area and water and air pollution is available with the

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.