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Moratorium on GM crops sought

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A round table on Genetic Engineering (GE) in food and farming has called for a moratorium on (GM) crops and foods for the next 50 years till it was convincingly proved that people, biodiversity and food sovereignty of the country.

In a Hyderabad Declaration that was adopted by the round table, the participants—scientists, biotechnologists, nutritionists and farmer activists—wanted the Centre to take a moratorium on GE crops. The fundamental principle of health was protection of nature. Research and development against nature should be stopped forthwith.

The declaration was released at a media conference addressed by Jeffrey Smit, former chairman of the Kerala Biodiversity Board and P. V. Reddy, former chairman of the National Action on Genetic Engineering (SAGE), which organised the round table. Other demands included a moratorium on trials and cultivation of GE crops, labelling of all imported GM food items, launching a public information campaign to help people understand the impact of GM crops through public information campaigns and a “magic bullet”.

They were seriously concerned about the secrecy surrounding the current crop trials pursued by the government. An illustration of this was the draconian provisions in the Biotechnology Regulatory Authority Bill like making anybody who criticised GE crops liable for heavy fines.

