



## **Monthly Bulletin on Genetic Engineering** **South Against Genetic Engineering (SAGE)**

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## 1. Community researcher reveals astonishing facts on Biosafety of GM crops

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One of the community researchers from Warangal has some frightening information to share on the Biosafety of GM crops. As you all know, cotton farmers in Warangal district took to Bt cotton on a large scale, with 90% of the cotton-growing area devoted to Bt! Two years ago, when a number of small ruminants succumbed to death on feeding Bt leftover cotton stalks, DDS and APCIDD complained of this to the District Joint Director (Animal Husbandry), and shared the information with the media. Later on, the State Sheperds'Union also joined the Initiative. Subsequently, GEAC ordered an inquiry and said that the deaths were due to the pesticide residues and not because of anything being wrong with Bt cotton. .

Against this backdrop, DDS initiated a controlled feeding experiment in the month of February 2008 in Narlapur village of Parkal mandal, Warangal district, to gain more insights on this issue. The experiment was carried out by Mr. Ch Sambaiiah, a community researcher working with SEED Organization in Warangal District. Following are the details of the experiment:

- 9 sheep of the age group 6 months to one year old (ideal age group for any study) were selected for the purpose of the experiment
- All the sheep were divided into three groups consisting of three sheep each, Group I were fed on Bollgard I; Group II were fed on Bollgard II and the third group were fed on Non Bt cotton hybrid
- The controlled feeding experiment was started on 18th Feb 2008 for all the three groups
- All the three groups were confined to open grazing in the respective harvested cotton fields (Bollgard I, Bollgard II and Non Bt) using a rope, so that they would not move away from their respective cotton fields.
- Everyday all the three groups were taken to the respective fields and allowed to graze from 10 am to 4:30 pm, with intervals for drinking water at the pond.
- The first symptoms of sickness manifested on 29th February (12th day of feeding) in three sheep of Group II, which were fed on Bollgard II. The symptoms observed were:- reddening of mucous membranes (upper and lower lips), swelling of lips which showed pain on touch, frothy salivation, and a sick blackish look.
- A day later, similar symptoms were also noticed in Group I sheep which were fed on the Bollgard I. In addition to the above symptoms, nostril discharge was also observed..
- In both the groups, a reduction in food intake was observed
- On 2nd March, bulging of the head was observed in both groups. Group II sheep also started the nostril discharge
- On 8<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> March, a slight fever was observed in Group I and Group II respectively, in addition to the rest of the symptoms.
- On 13th March, one sheep in Group I (which was fed on Bollgard I) died in the evening, while the other two also fell sick.
- On 14th March, one sheep each from Group I & Group II died at 8.30am and 7 am respectively in the morning. Both were taken to the Department of Animal Husbandry. Unfortunately, the authorities did not perform the postmortem when told that the sheep was part of the feeding experiment! A complaint was lodged with the Director, who instructed his office to avoid such lapses in future.

- The symptoms earlier mentioned continued until the remaining sheep in both the groups died on 18<sup>th</sup> March.
- The autopsy could not be done, because of the three-day holiday. No qualified Vet from the department was on hand for the task..
- The sheep that died had all the symptoms seen in earlier cases except loose motions which were observed last year.

Apart from these deaths, there were more too! Our team saw the carcasses of 15 sheep lying in the fields, and on enquiry it was found that they too had died of symptoms reported above. With more sheep dying this way, the shepherds are getting panicky, and are selling the sick ones to the butchers, who in turn pass it on to the customers for consumption. So the regulatory authorities and the Animal Husbandry departments have to seriously look into the issue of biosafety, and order a comprehensive study on GM crops and their possible health implications.

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## **2. Another Year of Doom: Bt Cotton's performance in AP - 2008**

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The huge hype of Bt Cotton has once again trapped cotton farmers in Andhra Pradesh. The results of a season long [covering Kharif cotton season of 2007-2008] study by the Deccan Development Society and the AP Coalition in Defence of Diversity clearly shows that Bt cotton farmers suffered 10% less profits than the farmers who cultivated non-Bt, but practiced non-pesticidal [NPM] methods on their farms.

In a study that covered 127 farmers from three cotton growing districts of AP viz., Warangal, Adilabad and Nalgonda three distinct facts have emerged:

Bt-farmers suffered 10% less returns than the non-Bt farmers practicing NPM methods

Bt-farmers had to invest 18% more on pest management than the NPM farmers. This is contrary to the Bt-industry promise that it will reduce the cost of pesticide use.

Bt-farmers had to invest 9% more for cultivating cotton as against the NPM farmers.

### **On net returns**

While Bt-cotton farmers earned Rs.6382 per acre in 2007-8, non-Bt farmers practicing NPM earned Rs.7046 per acre, nearly 700 rupees more than the Bt farmers. This is totally contrary to the claims of the Bt industry that Bt farmers get higher returns.

### **On Pesticide use**

Bt industry's USP [Unique Selling Proposition] is that cultivation of Bt cotton eliminates pests on cotton and helps farmers **significantly reduce the use of pesticides. In 2007, a forgotten pest called mealy bug devastated Bt cotton in many places.. The Bt farmers had to spend 18% more than NPM farmers to save their cotton from pests. It is not just in 2007-8 that these truths fly in our face. Over the last half a decade of Bt cotton cultivation in AP, the results are the same year after year.** This shows how distorted is the biotech industry claim that they are responsible for doubling cotton yields in India and giving farmers a 100% higher profit. This is obfuscating the realities of cotton cultivation

### **Damages to the health of soil, animals and people**

On another front, Bt cotton cultivation has been steadily proving to be dangerous to the ecological health of our villages. They are destroying soil health, human health and animal health.

Therefore, it is once again the demand from the AP Coalition in Defence of Diversity that the governments of Andhra Pradesh and India act immediately to halt the monstrous march of Bt cotton destroying farmers, incomes, soils, animal and human health.

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### **3. Bt cotton has multiple hazards, says biotechnologist**

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Genetically Modified Crop B.T Cotton has been found hazardous not only for farm animals like buffalo, cow, sheep, goat, etc., but for human beings as well. For the last 4-5 years, milk yielded from farm animals, fed on whole seeds and seed oilcake of BT Cotton, has come under the scanner as it has been proved toxic and disease-causing for humans. Reputed biotechnologist and geneticist of the city and national coordinator of Kisan Bachao Andolan, Dr Sudhir Kumar Kaura, based on his team's extensive scientific field studies has communicated to the press that the ill effects of BT cotton on human and farm animal health can now be clearly spotted in rural as well as urban areas of Hisar District. As reported in Andhra Pradesh and some other states, BT Cotton has also caused untimely deaths; decline in milk quantity and quality; serious reproductive failures and problems including pseudo-pregnancy in thousands of farm animals in Hisar district. Incidentally, in January this year, through an international press release (published at <http://www.i-sis.org.uk/BTAllergyNorthIndia.php>), Dr Kaura was the first one to report cases of skin itching and allergy like symptoms in farmers, farm labourers and farm animals in Sadalpur village of Hisar District. Later on, such symptoms were reported in every part of cotton belt in north India. Farm families in the district have collectively incurred economic loss of millions of rupees on account of human and animal diseases and untimely animal deaths due to BT-Cotton. According to Dr Kaura, the problems due to BT Cotton can be regarded as epidemic.

Milk of farm animals, eating BT Cotton, is deadly for animals' offspring as well as for humans of all age groups, as it has been found to cause increased death rate in infants, general debility, allergy, unexplained health problems, fever, decline in immunity, weakness, etc. in laboratory and field conditions. In some preliminary studies, many human and animal subjects have shown relief from disease symptoms when BT Cotton was omitted from feed or food sources.

Dr Kaura says that government functionaries like state agri-universities, ICAR, agricultural and health ministry, and agri-scientists are well aware of the deadly nature and other health compromising effects of BT Cotton but they pose as if they are unaware of the facts and field reports, probably under pressure from their superiors who are in turn controlled by politicians.

While nearly all scientists of India have chosen to remain dumb on this issue of human survival, in spite of knowing research and field positions, a senior agri-scientist of national repute, Dr M S Narwal has shown courage to speak against genetically modified (GM) Crops in his appeal to the international community of agri-scientists. He released his appeal early this month in which he has appealed to all agricultural scientists of the world to kindly help farmers in coming out of the vicious circle of genetically modified (GM) crops like BT Cotton.

**Source : [Save Farmer group](#)**

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#### **4. “Rules governing bio-safety aspects are inadequate”**

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<http://www.thehindu.com/2008/05/04/stories/2008050456560900.htm>

JAIPUR: Civil society organisations working on the food security issues here have expressed concern over what they describe as lack of public participation in policy-making on bio-safety in India in the run-up to the international conference of the signatories to the Cartagena Protocol on Bio-safety to be held in Bonn, Germany, from May 12 to 16.

The Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety – the first international regulatory framework for safe transfer, handling and use of living modified organisms – addressed the potential for harm of genetic engineering on the environment and human health. India signed and ratified the protocol in January 2003.

Bio-diversity activist and secretary of the Jaipur-based Centre for Community Economics and Development Consultants' Society (CECOEDECON), Sharad Joshi, said here on Saturday that the rules governing the aspects such as use, import and storage of hazardous micro-organisms and genetically engineered organisms in the country were inadequate to address the protocol's mandate.

#### **Right to safe food**

CECOEDECON is one of the members of the Save Food Coalition campaigning for the right to safe food as a fundamental right and working for public awareness, capacity building and advocacy on the subject. The coalition is supported by the groups such as the Gene Campaign, Food Trade and Nutrition Alliance-Asia and Pairvi.

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#### **5. Greenpeace uncovers illegal GM food in India**

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<http://www.hindu.com/thehindu/holnus/015200805081340.htm>

**New Delhi, 2 May, 2008:**

Greenpeace confirmed the presence of illegal Genetically Modified [GM] food in India at a press conference. Tests conducted at an independent laboratory on products picked up randomly from a supermarket in New Delhi has revealed that PepsiCo's Doritos Corn Chips contain genetically modified Mon 863 and NK 603 variety corn ingredients. None of these varieties have been approved in India for human consumption.

“Though India has a law prohibiting the sale of any genetically modified food products without the permission of Genetic Engineering Approval Committee [3], the presence of these products in the supermarket shelves proves that the regulatory system is in shambles. India seems to have become a dumping ground for genetically modified products that have been rejected due to their risk to health elsewhere,” said Rajesh Krishnan, Campaigner, Sustainable Agriculture, Greenpeace India.

This is a serious violation of people's right to safe food, as consumers are being kept ignorant of the presence of potentially dangerous GM ingredients in the food products. There is growing scientific evidence on the health hazards of GM foods across the world and it cannot be ignored any more. The mandate of keeping hazardous food out of the country should be the duty of the Health Ministry and it should take immediate steps to stop the illegal entry of these foods," said Dr Mira Shiva, of the Initiative for Health, Equity and Society.

Greenpeace is demanding that the Health ministry take notice of this serious violation and threat to human health and constitute the Food Safety and Standards Authority at the earliest. In the meanwhile,

1. Effect an immediate confiscation of these products from the market, keeping in mind their potential health risk.
2. All imported food products should be embargoed and tested for any GM contamination and GM products found should be rejected.

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## **6. Kerala Biodiversity Board demands ban on GM Cultivation**

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Opposing the new technology of genetically modified seed cultivation, V.S.Vijayan, Chairman, Kerala Biodiversity Board, said the centre should ban the trial run of genetically modified rice variety in India. He said the technology was a "failure" the world over. It not only posed a health hazard, but would make farmers "slaves" of multinational seed companies. He added that the Board had a mission to gradually cultivate the land the organic way.

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## **7. Cracks in agri commission over GM field trial ban**

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[http://www.checkbiotech.org/green\\_News\\_Genetics.aspx?infoId=17583](http://www.checkbiotech.org/green_News_Genetics.aspx?infoId=17583)

KOLKATA, India - Members of the state agricultural commission today disagreed with their own recommendation seeking a ban on open field trials of genetically modified crops made in interim report of the commission. The division in their ranks was apparent during a discussion with the chief minister, Mr. Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee over the issue.

The commission had recommended in its interim report a complete ban on all kinds of open field trials and commercial cultivation of all kinds of GM crop varieties in the state till all issues of environment and bio-safety are resolved. Although the commission's resolution had been unanimous, a section of the members today opposed the recommendation of putting a complete ban on open field trials. "It was pointed out to the chief minister that the resolution was not unanimous and there is disagreement over banning field trials of GM crops in the state. There is a need for going for experimental field testing while ensuring the field releases go through the necessary precautionary processes," said a member of the commission. However, members favouring the ban said no note of dissent had been submitted to the commission during discussion on the issue.

"The Chief Minister assured that the state government would announce its decision on this issue in due course of time," said another member present in the meeting.

The agriculture minister, Mr. Naren De later said that the various departments like horticulture, fisheries, animal resources development, agri-marketing and cooperation would discuss the recommendations and then hold separate meetings with the commission in June to come up with a final report. Land and land reforms minister, Mr. Abdur Razzak Molla told commission members that it should suggest ways to ensure that farmers get proper cash value for their produce.

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## **8. Panel ignored Bt cotton toxicity evidence – Pushpa M Bhargava blames it on GEAC**

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[http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/India/Panel\\_ignored\\_Bt\\_cotton\\_toxicity\\_evidence/articleshow/3049910.cms](http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/India/Panel_ignored_Bt_cotton_toxicity_evidence/articleshow/3049910.cms)

NEW DELHI: While Bt brinjal is at an advanced stage of being cleared for commercial cultivation, a Supreme Court nominee to the regulatory body has come up with a "major argument" to suspend the existing cultivation of Bt cotton due to bio-safety concerns about genetically modified crops.

Molecular scientist P M Bhargava, who was appointed three months ago at the instance of the SC as a special invitee to the Genetic Engineering Approval Committee (GEAC), found that the regulator had ignored evidence of toxicity in Bt cotton leading to the death of hundreds of sheep in Andhra Pradesh.

In a letter to GEAC dated May 14, Bhargava said that the three documents relied upon by the regulator "contradict ... unequivocally" its own claim that the mortality of sheep might be due to pesticide residues rather than Bt toxin.

In keeping with his SC-given mandate of lending more transparency to GEAC's functioning, Bhargava called for a review of its assertion that the rise in sheep mortality had nothing to do with Bt cotton. He said the three reports cited by GEAC "underscore the fact that no serious studies to rule this out have been done so far.

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## **9. GEAC calls for socio-economic survey of Bt brinjal**

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<http://www.financialexpress.com/news/GEAC-calls-for-socioeconomic-survey-of-Bt-brinjal/313798/>

The Genetic Engineering Approval Committee (GEAC) has decided to ask the National Centre for Agriculture Economics and Policy Research (NCAP) to conduct a socio-economic survey of the Bt brinjal developed by the Indian seed company, Mahyco with technology sourced from Monsanto. NCAP is one of the affiliated institutes of the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR).

The director of the Indian Institute of Vegetable Research (IIVR), Mathura Rai and the ADG of plant protection, TR Rajendran will also be associated with the socio-economic survey of Bt brinjal. GEAC's cautious move follows the sharp criticism of the founder director of the Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology (CCMB), Pushpa M Bhargava about the lack of health and bio-safety data of GM crops in the

country. He also pointed out the incidence of sheep mortality reportedly due to grazing over Bt cotton fields in Warangal and Adilabad districts in Andhra Pradesh.

The Supreme Court while passing an interim order in a writ petition filed by Aruna Rodrigues, PV Satheesh and Rajiv Baruah had said that Bhargava and M.Swaminathan should be invited to the GEAC meeting. Though the GEAC has called for socio-economic survey of Bt brinjal, it is yet to take a decision on proper biosafety and health data as suggested by Bhargava.

The GEAC is slated to meet May 28, 2008 and on the agenda for discussion is the consideration of conducting experimental seed production of Bt brinjal by Mahyco, apart from issues relating to commercial releases and field trials of different Bt cotton hybrids.

GEAC has, however, agreed that there is an urgent need to suggest integrated resistance management strategy in respect of Bt cotton as suggested by KR Kranthi of the Central Institute of Cotton Research.

Kranthi had suggested that such a strategy needs to be implemented to prevent increased pest attacks on Bt cotton. The GEAC is of the view that until a suitable integrated resistance management strategy is put in place the current practice of maintaining 20% area as refuge should be strictly complied with. GEAC has also decided to review the Supreme Court's order on biosafety protocol.

## ***GM Global News***

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### **10. Cartagena Protocol fails to ensure global liability**

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<http://www.financialexpress.com/news/Cartagena-Protocol-fails-to-ensure-global-liability/312791/>

The fourth meeting of parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety which concluded in Bonn in Germany last week (May 12-16, 2008) failed to ensure a global liability regime for the damages likely to be caused by the living modified organisms (LMOs) due to India not taking an assertive position, alleged the convener of Gene Campaign, Suman Sahai.

Gene Campaign was invited to attend the Bonn meeting as observer and Sahai said "we were closely watching the position of different countries which are parties to the Cartagena Protocol.

India is a member of the "like minded" group of 80 countries which has a common stand on demanding a global liability regime and strict implementation of the precautionary principles of the Cartagena Protocol. While Malaysia, The Philippines, Columbia and other countries of the group strongly lobbied for the birth of a global liability regime, Brazil, Japan and Peru opposed the move and as a result the conference could not take a decision, but agreed to discuss in the next meeting, she said.

The Indian delegation was led by the member-secretary of the Genetic Engineering Approval Committee (GEAC), Ranjani Warriar. Sahai alleged that India, instead of asserting for a global liability regime, made an utterly ineffective presentation saying that it had implemented the relevant provisions of the Cartagena Protocol.

She said, "India has no provision for participation of civil society groups or public representatives in the decision making on issues relating to LMOs, which is contrary to Article 23 of the protocol. Though there is a law relating to right to information, the government had on many occasions refused to divulge data on biosafety. The social and economic impact of GM crops has not yet been assessed so far. Government has not yet accommodated precautionary principles relating to GM crops or any mechanism for addressing liability and redress and has not introduced labeling of GM food. Instead it is introducing GM brinjal in the centre of its origin."

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## **11. EU delays decision on approving more GM crops**

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<http://www.reuters.com/article/marketsNews/idUSL0759943020080507>

BRUSSELS - The European Commission, the EU's executive arm, delayed a decision on Wednesday on whether farmers may grow more genetically modified crops, saying further scientific analysis was needed before approval could be given.

The European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) will be asked for more assessment of the risk of growing two GM maize crops, and a potato modified to produce extra starch. That move is likely to put off EU approval of the crops for several months.

EU Environment Commissioner Stavros Dimas, one of the 27-strong Commission's most GMO-wary members, had wanted to reject the two maize applications, pitting himself against many Commission colleagues more favourable towards biotechnology. He has also delayed deciding on the potato for nearly a year.

"The Commission will adopt the pending decision if and when EFSA confirms the safety of these products," Commission spokesman Johannes Laitenberger told a news conference, referring specifically to the two modified maize types.

The EU has not approved any GM crops for growing since 1998. Europe has long been split on biotech policy and the EU's 27 countries regularly clash over whether to approve new, finished GM varieties for import. The Commission usually ends up issuing a rubberstamp approval, which it may do under EU law.

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## **12. Romania set to ban approved GM corn crop**

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[http://www.checkbiotech.org/green\\_News\\_Genetics.aspx?Name=genetics&infoId=17370](http://www.checkbiotech.org/green_News_Genetics.aspx?Name=genetics&infoId=17370)

Romania intends to join six other European Union members in banning the only genetically modified crop approved for use in the bloc, its environment minister said on Thursday, in a fresh blow to the biotechnology industry.

Attila Korodi called for a moratorium on planting MON810, a corn produced by Monsanto, the US company, and said his country's bio-security committee would start examining the possibility of a ban on April 15.

Romania, a major agricultural producer, was a big grower of GM crops before it joined the EU last year. "If they say they have concerns, then we will ask the European Commission for a temporary ban," he said.

"We simply don't know what its environmental impact will be." Italy, Austria, Greece and Poland have also banned the insect-resistant corn, claiming that the toxin it contains could be harmful to other wildlife. However, the Commission, which regulates the market, has yet to sanction their bans.

Polls have shown most Romanians do not want to eat GM food, in tune with public attitudes in most EU countries. Greenpeace, the environmental group, welcomed the news. "The Romanian people overwhelmingly reject this unsafe, unnecessary and unsustainable technology. It is vital the ban is in place as soon as possible, so natural crops can be safe from GM contamination before the sowing season starts," said Gabriel Paun of Greenpeace Romania.

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### **13. Poland to hamper GMO planting despite lifting ban**

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<http://www.farminguk.com/index.asp?show=newsArticle&id=6466>

Poland will seek to make planting of genetically modified seeds nearly impossible for local farmers even though it plans to lift an official ban to comply with EU law, the agriculture minister told Reuters on Friday. European Union regulators launched legal action against Poland last month over plans that amounted to a national GMO ban by its biggest ex-communist member. Lawyers for the European Commission said it had no scientific justification.

"We will delay the farming of genetically modified animal feed as much as possible because there is no social acceptance for it," Agriculture Minister Marek Sawicki told Reuters during a Moscow visit with the Polish prime minister.

"According to EU law we cannot forbid it, but we can make it as difficult as possible, setting additional requirements, such as obtaining permission by neighbours," he said.

Further, Poland is also sticking to plans to ban the use of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) in livestock fodder, despite an earlier rethink, the agriculture ministry announced Tuesday. Ministry spokeswoman Malgorzata Ksiazek told AFP that the government had decided to put on ice a move to amend a restrictive law that is due to come into force on August 1. In January, Poland's newly-installed liberal government had said it planned to change the incoming law in order to stay in line with European Union rules. Poland's previous conservative-nationalist administration, which clashed regularly with Brussels on a host of issues, had in 2006 announced that it would ban GMOs in fodder from this year

## ***BUSINESS AND GM***

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### **14. EU, US seek arbitration in biotech crops row**

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<http://www.reuters.com/article/rbssHealthcareNews/idUSL0862630920080208>

GENEVA, Feb 8 (Reuters) - The European Union and United States said on Friday they were seeking arbitration at the World Trade Organisation (WTO) in their long-running row over the EU's ban on biotech crops.

But the two trading powers told the WTO's dispute settlement body they intended to suspend the request for arbitration to give them more time to work out a solution, trade officials said.

Crops engineered to resist pests and tolerate pesticides while improving yields are increasingly popular with farmers in rich and poor countries.

But many EU consumers, keen on organic produce, are wary of eating "Franken foods", while advocacy groups say genetically modified (GMO) crops threaten biodiversity.

The WTO has ordered Brussels to end the ban on GMO crops, and Washington has asserted its right to retaliate if the EU fails to do so by seeking compensation equal to the lost value of exports and licensing fees.

But the EU says this compensation is out of line with WTO rules, hence the need for arbitration.

Washington says its main interest is to open up EU markets to biotech crops rather than seeking compensation by suspending benefits enjoyed by the EU in U.S. markets under WTO rules.

Brussels has found it hard to implement the WTO ruling in the dispute, which also pits it against Argentina and Canada, because the 27 EU member states operate their own bans.

Friday's manoeuvrings at the WTO aimed to get around inconsistencies in WTO dispute rules, which set conflicting timetables for seeking compensation when members fail to comply with rulings, and determining whether they have done so.

Austria continues to ban MON 810 maize made by U.S. biotech company Monsanto (MON.N: [Quote](#), [Profile](#), [Research](#)) and T25 maize developed by German drugs and chemicals group Bayer (BAYG.DE: [Quote](#), [Profile](#), [Research](#)). The EU's biggest food producer France imposed a temporary ban last month on MON 810.

The case will be closely watched by other biotech companies such as U.S. chemicals majors Du Pont (DD.N: [Quote](#), [Profile](#), [Research](#)) and Dow Chemical (DOW.N: [Quote](#), [Profile](#), [Research](#)), and Switzerland's Syngenta (SYNN.VX: [Quote](#), [Profile](#), [Research](#)), the world's biggest agrochemicals company. (Reporting by Jonathan Lynn; Editing by Catherine Evans)

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## **15. EU ministers to debate approving GM cotton imports**

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[http://www.checkbiotech.org/green\\_News\\_Biofuels.aspx?Name=biofuels&infoId=17847](http://www.checkbiotech.org/green_News_Biofuels.aspx?Name=biofuels&infoId=17847)

BRUSSELS - European Union farm ministers are likely to debate by mid-July whether to allow imports of a genetically modified strain of cotton to be used as a food ingredient and in animal feed, a document showed on Tuesday. The cotton, known as LLCotton25 and developed by Germany's Bayer CropScience

(BAYG.DE: Quote, Profile, Research), has been engineered to resist certain herbicides and would not be grown in Europe's fields. Back in February, a panel of national EU experts failed to muster the consensus required under the EU's complex weighted voting system either to approve or reject the company's request for an import licence -- normally valid for 10 years. So, under EU law, the European Commission has now escalated the dossier to ministers who must debate within three months whether to issue an import authorisation. If they fail to agree, then the Commission gains the right to rubberstamp an approval.

However, EU officials said country voting positions were unlikely to alter when the ministers tackled the issue. Three ministerial meetings are scheduled before the EU summer break: May 19, June 23-24 and July 15. EU countries rarely agree on anything to do with GMOs and their discussions on authorising imports on new modified products usually descend into an ill-tempered deadlock.

At the February experts' meeting, where the bloc's member states were represented, 14 countries voted in favour of authorising, nine against, three abstained and one country was not represented: not enough to secure a majority, since weighted country voting influence varies widely.

If approved by the EU, Bayer CropScience would be allowed to import LLCotton25 seeds and derived products for use as food -- crushed into oil, for example -- as well as animal feed, like cottonseed meal and seed hulls. EU farm ministers are also due to vote before the summer on another Bayer CropScience import application, for a biotech soybean known by its codename A2704-12. Again, the product would be grown outside the EU and imported for use in food and feed.

*This monthly bulletin is brought out by South Against Genetic Engineering (SAGE), a coalition of civil society activists, farmers, scientists, academicians, and consumer groups of four Southern States of India, viz., Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra. SAGE has been waging a concerted battle against genetic engineering through a series of activities that involve public protests, media actions, seminars, consultations and publication of a series of education.*

**For details please contact:**  
**South Against Genetic Engineering (SAGE)**  
**101, Kishan Residency, Street no: 5**  
**Begumpet, Hyderabad- 500016, A.P.**  
**email: [ddshyderabad@gmail.com](mailto:ddshyderabad@gmail.com)**