

# SOUTHERN ACTION ON GENETIC ENGINEERING

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## PRESS RELEASE

July 31, 2011

Southern Action on Genetic Engineering [SAGE] strongly condemns the latest anti democratic and conspiratorial ways of biotech companies who have demanded and almost succeeded in calling back the earlier decision of the GEAC [Genetic Engineering Approval Committee] of India to make it mandatory to obtain State Governments approval for any GM trial in a given state.

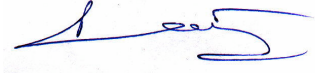
The recent Lokayukta report in Karnataka has clearly mentioned the extra constitutional role and corrupt ways of the corporate houses in subverting the rule of law in iron or mining. The role of multinational agro chemical companies in the field of agriculture is still worse and borders on a threat to national security of India.

Last week the GEAC, the apex regulatory body set up by the Government of India had announced that any company intending to test GM crops had to obtain the prior permission of the concerned state government before the trials. This decision was welcomed by bodies such as SAGE who have been constantly calling for a democratization of the debate over GE [genetic engineering] in agriculture. It was legally and constitutionally right to make the state government take the first call on approval of any GM trial because agriculture is a state subject. But now that it is sought to be subverted by the vested interests such as the ABLE-AG, the SAGE has called upon the Union Minister for Environment and Forests, Ms Jayanthi Natarajan for an ***Outright dismissal of the demand for revoking the State Governments approval to the GM trials***

In a letter written to Ms Natarajan, the SAGE has “respectfully reminded” her that overall, field trials of ten GM crops are in the pipeline in different parts of the country according to media reports and therefore her Ministry must *obtain affidavits from the State Governments on the issue so that they [the state governments] become partners in any new policy decision that the Government of India and GEAC will be taking.*

The SAGE has also demanded that 2011-12 be declared as the **Year of National Debate on GE** in order to initiate a nationwide debate on the regulatory process on GM Crops. Such debate must be taken to the grassroots and administratively there should be blockwise debates so that every farmer and consumer becomes a part of this discussion and plays her/his full part in developing a policy that has huge bearing the food we eat and the crops we grow.

Before such a debate is initiated, the state should initiate a massive awareness programme on genetic engineering in agriculture so that every citizen of the country fully understands the health and environmental impact of the GE foods and GE crops.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'P. V. Satheesh', written in a cursive style.

[p v satheesh]

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