



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

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## ***1. Bt Cotton in AP has proved ineffective again, says SAGE study***

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*Bt cotton in Andhra Pradesh continues to be ineffective according to the recent study by the South Against Genetic Engineering. The study continues to confirm the trends seen over the last six years. In spite of the spirited hype put up by the biotech industry, the ground reality is that Bt Cotton has repeatedly proved inferior to the non Bt varieties grown by the non-pesticidal method in terms of net returns to the farmer and the cost of pest management and overall cultivation.*

*Bt cotton, in comparison to its Non Bt counterpart cost 82% more for seeds, 6% more on fertilizers, 22% MORE ON PEST MANAGEMENT, and 9% more on total cultivation costs. This once again explodes the myth of the industry that Bt Cotton reduces pesticide use and lowers cultivation costs.*

*The season long SAGE study conducted over a period of ten months on over 120 farms in AP, comes up with a startling conclusion that NON BT FARMERS EARNED 10% MORE PROFIT THAN Bt FARMERS. This once again shows how deceptive are the industry claims that Bt cotton farmers are making huge profits across the country.*

*The study done by Dr Qayum and Mr. Kiran Sakkhari along with dozens of community and farmer researchers will be ready by the first week of May, 2008*

## ***2. SAGE leads State wide Rallies on GM Opposition Day***

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Over 150 farmers and shepherds from 13 villages gathered in Warangal city, the headquarters of Warangal District in Andhra Pradesh, [a region which has seen an explosion of Bt Cotton cultivation over the last five years] and pledged not to sow GM crops on their farms. The event took place on the GM opposition day, 8th April 2008.

Farmers who gathered to protest the introduction and large scale spread of GM crops through corporate manipulation, raised slogans against corporate control over the seed sector in India. Shepherds who have witnessed the deaths of their small ruminants grazing on Bt cotton stalks narrated their bitter experiences with the Bt cotton. Farmers who grew Bt cotton and experienced the damage to succeeding crops like chilly and tomato also shared their grief with their fellow farmers.

The event was organized by the South Against Genetic Engineering, Andhra Pradesh Coalition in Defence of Diversity, and Deccan Development Society in collaboration with Warangal based NGOs (CROPS, SSS, SEED, SYO, MARI, SPACE and PSS). In Medak, another district of Andhra Pradesh, over 300 women farmer leaders representing over 60 villages, took out an Anti GE rally singing freshly composed anti GE songs, carrying placards opposing Genetic Engineering and shouting slogans. At the end of the rally they took a collective pledge against genetic engineering as follows:

- We the farmers from Medak District of the state of Andhra Pradesh, India have today met in Pastapur village and discussed the issue of genetically engineered crops.
- We have directly felt the impacts of cultivation of genetically modified crops in our vicinity or indirectly understood it through fellow farmers, newspapers and other media.
- We know that wherever genetically engineered crops have been cultivated,
- our soils have become toxic and are on the path of total destruction
- our animals have died grazing these crops
- our health has been destroyed through skin allergies and respiratory problems, whenever we have worked in these fields, and that
- our control over our seeds has been snatched away from us.
- We are therefore convinced that growing genetically engineered crops means the end of our soils, animals and our own existence as farmers.

***IN VIEW OF ALL THE ABOVE WE TAKE A PLEDGE THAT WE WILL NOT GROW GENETICALLY ENGINEERED CROPS ON OUR FARMS AND TO THE BEST OF OUR ABILITY PREVENT ITS CULTIVATION IN OUR***

**COMMUNITY. WE DECLARE OUR SOLIDARITY WITH ALL THE FARMERS AND CITIZENS WHO ARE OPPOSING GENETIC ENGINEERING IN AGRICULTURE.**

From April 9<sup>th</sup>, they fanned out into their own villages, took out village level rallies, and got community pledges that they will not allow the cultivation of Genetic Engineering in their communities. DDS had organized village level rallies in 50 villages in Medak district of Andhra Pradesh.

Apart from these two districts, over 8000 farmers participated in rallies and protest meets led by the Andhra Pradesh Coalition in Defence of Diversity in 11 districts of Andhra Pradesh where a total of 8000 farmers participated. The table below shows the places where the protests were held as well as the number of the participants:

S No	District	No of organizations	No of farmers participated
1	Srikakulam	5	285
2	Vizianagaram	1	110
3	Visakhapatnam	22	410
4	Chittoor (7 locations)	1	2714
5	Nalgonda	1	200
6	Nizamabad	1	500
7	Karimnagar	1	450
8	Adilabad	2	115
9	Medak	3	3000
10	Warangal	7	150
11	Nellore	1	100
	<b>Total</b>		<b>8034</b>

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### ***3. After Orissa, call for a ban on GM crop in AP***

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<http://www.andhracafe.com/index.php?m=show&id=33062>

Addressing an anti-GM protest meet at Hyderabad today, farmer leaders of all major farmers' organizations in the state of Andhra Pradesh demanded that the AP government take a clear anti-GM stand and ban GM crop trials in the state as has been done in other states like Kerala and Orissa. The protest was organized by the Coalition for a GM-Free AP, a network of civil society organizations and farmers' groups.

Speaking on the occasion, Sarampalli Mallareddy, Vice President, All India Kisan Sabha (affiliated to CPM) said, "When the first trials of Bt Cotton began in the state and the country, the Legislative Assembly of Andhra Pradesh passed a resolution against any GM crops and their trials in the state. Any cultivation or trials in the state of such crops is therefore illegal". He demanded that the AP government ban such trials in the state and not allow any GM food crops.

Raghava Reddy, President of Bhartiya Kisan Sangh pointed out that the government polices were allowing MNCs like Monsanto, total control over our agriculture. He pointed out that when chemical pesticides were brought in, we were told that no harm would come out of them when, in fact, the reality today points out to a different picture. The same can be anticipated from GM crops, so the government should have a long term vision about the impacts of such a technology, he said.

"We are not against technology and we welcome any technology that helps in improving the environment, economy and health of our citizens. However, GE crops do not deliver these. They increase the cost of production, cause deterioration in health and MNCs are making profit out of it. We want sustainable agriculture practices to be promoted", said Samineni Rama Rao, President, AP Rythu Sangam.

Ramakrishna, ex-MLA and President, Rythu Sangam (affiliated to CPI) said that the all-party forum created of farmers' unions in the state in the case of Minimum Support Price for paddy will also take up this anti-GM cause.

"Self reliance in seeds is very important and if all farmers start creating their own seeds, no MNC can make profits out of farmers. I urge all farmers to acquire those simple breeding skills. After all, companies are exploiting seed-producing farmers on the one hand and seed-consuming farmers on the other.. We need to put an end to this", said Gollamarri Shoury David, National Executive Committee Members of Bharatiya Janata Kisan Morcha, affiliated to the Bharatiya Janata Party.

Jamalaiah, President of the Andhra Pradesh Shepherds and Goatherds Union promised that their struggle would be intensified, to make the government answerable for the deaths of livestock after grazing on Bt Cotton fields. He demanded a complete halt to all research on GM crops until investigations on animal deaths were comprehensively done and made public.

"Genetic Modification is not true science, as it claims", pointed out Mr. Ramesh, General Secretary of Jana Vignyana Vedika, a people's science movement, which expressed its solidarity with the anti-GM cause.

B Venkateswarlu and Chittoor Rambabu also participated in the protest meet on behalf of Telugu Rythu, affiliated to the Telugu Desam Party [TDP]. Jeevan Kumar of Human Rights Forum also addressed the gathering.

The protest was attended by more than 250 farmers and consumers from different parts of Andhra Pradesh, including the ones who have been affected by losses incurred with Bt Cotton; who have experienced allergies while working in Bt Cotton fields; and who have lost their livestock due to grazing on Bt Cotton.

Further, scores of farmers who practice ecological farming also protested, urging the AP government to ban GM crop trials in the state. This protest was one of the events organised to mark the "Global Day of Action Against GM Crops", to add to the many protests all over India in different states by GM Free India & CSA, Hyderabad.

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#### ***4. Kerala Chief Minister minces no words against GM crops***

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Venue: A seminar on **GM Crops and Biodiversity** held in Trivandrum, the capital of the South Indian state of Kerala, the most literate [100% literacy] and the most progressive state of India.

In the most significant statement from any senior politician in India, Mr. Achutanandan, Chief Minister of Kerala, today said that his "government will not entertain any policy that will give a death blow to the farmer and the environment of the State through the unsubstantiated claim to produce more with the technique of genetic engineering".

"We are aware of all reports on GE, from across the globe, both for and against it," the Chief Minister said and recalled that earlier, under the slogan of Grow More Food, during the Green Revolution regime, "we violated the age old principles of farming in this country. The environment problem created by the Green Revolution was a disaster".

The Chief Minister further asserted that "When the Government of India wanted to have a GE trial in Palakkad [one of the districts of Kerala]; our government protested strongly and prevented it from happening. This policy of my government has not changed and will not change as long as we suspect the smallest of adversary effect on our agriculture through Genetic Engineering.

The MNCs in agriculture and marketing are working hard to tie down our farmers to contract farming. GE is another threat to the farmers' right to choose what they want to sow in their fields. Our scientists have a responsibility to help farmers to work on their traditional technology which is pro ecology, environment and biodiversity. Scientists are accountable to the people of this country. Social acceptability is the most important issue of any technology. "

**The Agriculture Production Commissioner of Kerala, Mr. Jayakumar said that** when GE comes up with the magic slogan of enhancing production, farmers are lured by it. Similarly when GE comes up with the claim that their product will prevent pests, farmers are irresistibly tempted by it. This is a trap that farmers fall into.

He further said that, "Until environmental discourse entered the developmental discourse, we were also totally unaware of this dimension of the problem. Most of our initiatives were myopic and had only short term focus, forgetting the long term impacts. This very same paradox confronts farmers when they are offered GE seeds. In the long term the food sovereignty of the country will be compromised, biodiversity will be eroded, and only one type of seed controlled by a MNC will be available. This is a moral, ethical and environmental disaster waiting to happen."

Source: Mr.P.V.Satheesh Secretary of DDS, who participated in the workshop

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## ***5. Call to boycott GM soya, corn products in Kerala***

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<http://www.thehindu.com/2008/04/09/stories/2008040950830500.htm>

KOCHI: A workshop on 'genetically-modified (GM) crops and their impact on Kerala's agriculture' held here on Tuesday called upon the people to boycott soybeans, corn (maize) products and other GM foods. It noted that these foods, which were imported from the U.S., were being sold by many supermarkets, thus posing health threats. The workshop, held as part of the "people's No-Genetic Engineering Day," pointed out that GM foods harmed human health as well as the environment and hurt the agrarian economy. The workshop urged the Central government not to allow any GM crop trials in Kerala and asked the people and the government to practice and promote organic farming in order to ensure chemicals-free food.

### **State to say 'no' to G.M crops**

Agriculture Minister Mullakkara Ratnakaran, who opened the meet, said that the State government was determined not to turn Kerala into a site for GM crop trials. He said multinational companies were trying to grab the monopoly of the seed from the farmers through the promotion of GM crops. This should be resisted by the people and the governments. The workshop pointed out that the genetically engineered (GE) cotton had created havoc in the rural economies of Andhra Pradesh, Punjab and other States and wrecked farmers' livelihoods. The GM seeds had been hard-sold by multinational companies as totally pest-resistant, and needing no use of pesticides. However, the promise had been proved hollow and the GM seeds had contaminated the land, water and livestock. The fertility and natural pest resistance of the croplands had been damaged, needing extra heavy use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides.

GE rice was a **threat to human health as well as the environment**. Since the GE rice plant produced a toxin that killed pests, it was quite possible that the toxin would get into the food chain.

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## ***6. Nammaazhvar's call to shun genetically modified crops in Tamil Nadu***

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<http://www.thehindu.com/2008/04/09/stories/2008040950830500.htm>

TIRUNELVELI: "Besides wiping out the protein-rich traditional cereals of the land, the food stuff made from genetically modified (GM) crop will also have a "carcinogenic effect" on consumers," the organic farming expert, G. Nammaazhvaar has warned.

Addressing a workshop on 'Genetically modified food and consumers' health' organised here on Saturday by the Federation of Consumer Organisations-Tamil Nadu and Pondicherry, the Consumer Research, Education, Action, Training and Empowerment and 'Thanal,' Thiruvananthapuram, he said that the increased use of GM seeds had resulted in higher expenditure for farmers.

DRO, G. Srinivasan; FEDCOT Chairman P. Duraisingam; D.A. Prabhakar, General Secretary of Red Cross Society, Palayamkottai; Rev. Fr. Cruz Antony, parish priest of St. Xavier's Cathedral Church; and G. Venkatachalam, District Coordinator of FEDCOT, participated

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## ***7. Farm Suicides and Stale mantras***

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18 March 2008

The country is passing through a deep agrarian crisis, with a mounting rate of farmers' suicides. Paradoxically, the farmers' suicides are happening also in the years of agricultural growth. Cases of suicides are in areas where agriculture is technologically developed and capital-intensive.

There are varying estimates of farmers' suicides during 1993-2003. Some place it at 1.4 lakh (140,000). Policymakers often dismiss it saying that in most of the cases, suicides were due to social and cultural problems. But why should a farmer have to face such problems? Is farming not remunerative enough?

Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, in his recent Independence Day (I-Day) address, admitted this agrarian crisis and said; "I see that our farmers in many parts are in crisis, not managing to eke out a decent living from their land. When I visited Vidarbha, the plight of the farmers there made a deep impact on me. The agricultural crisis that is forcing them to take the desperate step needs to be resolved. We need to think about how we can provide them a decent livelihood." Vidarbha is the cotton belt of Maharashtra, and the PM, during his visit to this region more than a month back, announced a relief package of Rs 3,750 crore (Rs 37,500 million). Referring to this in his I-Day address, he said, "We have waived interest on over-due loans for debt-stressed farmers in Vidarbha and will do the same in other suicide affected districts."

The Rs 3,750-crore (Rs 37,500 million) Vidarbha package may seem to be an astronomical amount, but it had very little impact in instilling confidence in farmers. Over a hundred farmer suicides were reported in Maharashtra after the PM visit.

For further details, you can log on to <http://www.mynews.in/fullstory.aspx?storyid=3049>

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## ***8. Indian farmers say no to SEZs, GM crops***

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[http://www.checkbiotech.org/green\\_News\\_Genetics.aspx?infol=17405](http://www.checkbiotech.org/green_News_Genetics.aspx?infol=17405)

NEW Delhi: - Indian farmers supported by their brethren in other countries have called for agrarian reforms for the benefit of small and marginal landholders. They said that farmlands should not be confiscated for setting up of special economic zones (SEZs) or for industrial activity. They called for stopping of harassment of the senior farmer leader, Mahendra Singh Tikait.

The resolutions passed by the farmers conclave hosted jointly by the Indian Coordination Committee of Farmers' Movement and La Via Campesina in Delhi, on Monday urged the government to stop its anti-farmer activities.

"Small and marginal farmers and the rural landless are facing harsh living conditions all over the world. Same is the case in India. Neoliberal corporate globalization driven by WTO has forced countries to open up their domestic markets for imports. As a result, farmers are losing their livelihood and even their lives", the resolution said.

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## ***9. Cotton farmers hold campaigns against Bt cotton***

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<http://www.thestatesman.net:80/page.news.php?clid=9&theme=&usrsess=1&id=195968>

BHUBANESWAR, March 19: Taking strong exception to the recent statement of agriculture director Dr Aurobindo Padhi that Bt cotton is necessary to boost the production of cotton in Orissa, Living farms, spearheading the anti-Bt cotton campaign, today said that Bt technology was never meant to boost yields but to introduce the Cry1Ac gene to transfer the toxicity of Bt to the plant itself to try and control pests. The Bt cotton method has caused the resurgence of secondary pests leading to increased use of pesticides, alleged the farm holders adding that costly seeds and the

increased investment on pesticides have resulted in indebtedness which has led to the current flurry of farmers suicides that shows no sign of stopping.

While the communiqué from the chief minister's office (letter no. 1687/ 9 August 2006) has categorically stated that introduction of Bt cotton into the state should be discouraged, how come the bureaucrat made such a comment, it wondered. Independent study by two prominent agricultural scientists Dr Abdul Qayum and Mr. Kiran Sakkhari, and the report entitled 'The story of Bt cotton in Andhra Pradesh: Erratic processes and results', published by the Centre for Sustainable Agriculture (CSA), point out the adverse impact it has on land, cultivation and human beings, Living Farm said. In a statement issued here, it said that the cost of pest management of Bt cotton was 690 per cent higher than in non-pesticidal management (NPM) farming systems.

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## ***10. A Government scientist's appeal against genetically modified (GM) Crops.***

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[www.KisanBachaoAndolan.co.cc](http://www.KisanBachaoAndolan.co.cc)

A One Day Seminar on 'Modern Agricultural and Problems of Farmers' was organised under the aegis of Save the Farmer Movement (Kisan Bachao Andolan) at 122, Sec. 15, Hisar, Haryana, India.

Dr N S Verma, a former Senior Professor at CCS Haryana Agricultural University, Hisar, India, who was also a former Deputy-Director at the Directorate of Extension Education, CCS Haryana Agricultural University, Hisar, India, chaired this seminar. The seminar was attended by reputed agricultural scientists and agricultural officers of the state, agricultural scientists and officers from the private sector, medical practitioners, social and political leaders of the state, representatives of agricultural department of the state, women representatives of districts, national level organisations working on agriculture, local media and the general public.

Dr Rajeev Dikshit, who worked with Dr APJ Abdul Kalam, the former President of India on 'Missile Programme of India' was the main speaker. At the seminar, Dr. M S Narwal, a Senior Indian Agricultural Scientist, and the former President of Teachers' Association of CCS Haryana Agricultural University, appealed to all the agricultural scientists of the world to help the farmers in coming out of the vicious circle of dangerous genetically modified (GM) crops like BT Cotton, which are harmful for humans, animals, ecology and the environment.

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## ***11. Brinjals commit suicide for Greenpeace cause***

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<http://www.ibnlive.com/news/brinjals-commit-suicide-for-greenpeace-cause/61415-3.html>

Mumbai: If you are the curious kind and have always pondered over questions like 'Who are we and why are we here?' here's another one for you - **Just why did Mr. Brinjal commit suicide? A thousand brinjals were found hanging from electricity poles, street lamp posts and trees across Mumbai with suicide notes attached** - attracting curious onlookers.

The stunt was a part of Greenpeace's unique protest against genetically modified vegetables that could soon find their way into your neighbourhood vegetable market. Greenpeace Campaigns Manager, Rajesh Krishnan says, "We selected brinjal because it will be the first genetically modified vegetable to be introduced in the Indian market in early 2009."

Greenpeace says:

- Genetically modified brinjal contains a foreign gene from bacteria.
- The bacteria make the plant produce its own pesticides to protect itself. Also, genetically modified vegetables contain anti-biotic resistance markers, which mean that if you consume them, your body will not react to antibiotics in case you have an infection.

A dietician at Sehat, Lini Chaudhry says, "More investigation is required before genetically modified foods become available for consumption." While there is still some time before genetically modified vegetables hit the Indian market,

they are already a topic of huge debate in the West. *And then after the tenth day, the poor Brinjal knocks the doors of the court. Below is the report:*

### ***GM brinjal battle goes to HC***

[http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/GM\\_brinjal\\_battle\\_goes\\_to\\_HC/articleshow/2902812.cms](http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/GM_brinjal_battle_goes_to_HC/articleshow/2902812.cms)

NEW DELHI, India - It's a classic case of commercial interest vs. public interest which could set an important precedent. Genetically modified brinjal — expected to be the country's first edible GM crop — could find its way to your plate soon.

But first, the Delhi high court will have to decide whether the company conducting its field trials can keep data on health and environment safety tests out of the public domain on the grounds that the information is a "trade secret."

The data in question comprises toxicity and allergenicity studies and was submitted by Maharashtra Hybrid Seeds Co Ltd (Mahyco), a subsidiary of multinational Monsanto, to the department of biotechnology for regulatory clearances. The Central Information Commission heard a second appeal on November 22, 2007. The Commissioner, after going through the Environmental Protection Act (1986), noted that "genetically engineered organism or cells are recognised by the government as an Item, potentially hazardous to public health."

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### ***12. SC asks committee to study GM crops***

[http://www.business-standard.com/common/news\\_article.php?autono=319511&leftnm=3&subLeft=0&chkFlg=](http://www.business-standard.com/common/news_article.php?autono=319511&leftnm=3&subLeft=0&chkFlg=)

In an interim order on a public interest petition filed by the environment NGO, Gene Campaign in 2004, the Supreme Court today directed the genetic engineering approval committee (GEAC) to consider the toxicity and allergenicity of the genetically modified (GM) food items.

It has also asked the government to post the relevant material on the website so that independent experts could examine them.

The committee has also been asked to study the isolation distance of the experimental field from human habitation and the level of detection (LoD) ratio. At present, the isolation distance is fixed at 200 metres for rice. The committee has been asked to examine the objections in this field.

Regarding the LoD, the ratio is 0.01 per cent which roughly means one toxic grain in 10,000. This is also debatable, according to the petitioner, Gene Campaign, which moved the public interest petition before the Bench headed by Chief Justice K G Balakrishnan. The court asked the committee to examine these parameters also.

According to the petitioner, several private companies with foreign collaboration are developing GM food grain and vegetables in the country. Alleging that the Centre is not regulating their activities, the NGO said that unregulated release of GM grains and vegetables in the Indian environment will be harmful. It sought to prevent the release of GM foods without safety verification done by an independent agency. After several hearings in the last three years, the Supreme Court had in 2007 set up a committee consisting of scientists, PM Bhargava and MS Swaminathan, as independent members and the government scientists to study the impact, and clear the GM foods. This committee is yet to submit its final report. Meanwhile, GM food companies have insisted they have internationally-recognised safety standards, and there is no need for additional guidelines. However, according to the petitioner, the German Supreme Court had verified one company's safety claim on GM foods and found it to be false.

This was followed by European countries banning most of the GM foods. The petitioners emphasized that the Indian Supreme Court should similarly verify the claims of MNCs instead of accepting their claims. Though the Centre claimed that all relevant information was available on the website, Gene Campaign protested that only data about GM cotton and brinjal was available.

The government stated that the companies which experimented with the modified foods could not be asked to disclose their processes and other confidential data. The association of manufacturers protested against the demand for

disclosure of data protected by the Right to Information (RTI) Act and patent law. Gene Campaign counsel Prashant Bhusan complained that the committee has not yet disclosed the minutes of its last meeting and the guidelines it has laid down for gene research. The court asked the government to post the details on the website. According to legal experts, today's Supreme Court order will have an impact on a pending appeal on a similar issue in the Delhi High Court. The appeal was filed by Maharashtra Hybrid Seed Company, seed partner of Monsanto of the US, against a Central Information Commission order, which directed the government to release the data received from Mahyco for regulatory clearance purposes. **The petitioners have been urging transparency in tests and approvals for GM crop trials. Then came this order from the court; below are the details**

### ***SC tells monitoring panel to post toxicity information on website***

Apr 9 2008 <http://www.livemint.com/2008/04/09000539/SC-tells-monitoring-panel-to-p.html>

New Delhi: In order to improve transparency in the trials of genetically modified, or GM, crops, the Supreme Court on Tuesday directed the Indian government's Genetic Engineering Approval Committee, or GEAC, to post data on its website on the toxicity and allergic potential of GM plant varieties undergoing trial. The apex court's order came after it heard a petition filed by activist Aruna Rodrigues in 2005 seeking a ban on GM crops, which the court heard simultaneously with a similar petition filed by Gene campaign, a no-profit organization. The petitioners have been urging transparency in tests and approvals for GM crop trials, in addition to concrete guidelines, after the Supreme Court lifted an eight-month ban on field trials of GM food crops in September last year.

GEAC, an agency of the ministry of environment and forests, approves, reviews, monitors and investigates activities involving hazardous micro-organisms and recombinants besides GM organisms and products.

The Centre for Sustainable Agriculture, a lobby group for organic farmers, said the information currently available in the public domain on the bio-safety of GM crops under trial is "insufficient". "The regulators have been saying they have information on their websites but these are only summaries. We welcome this order. This data should now be subjected to rigorous analysis by others." A division bench led by Chief Justice of India K.G. Balakrishnan also asked GEAC to examine the distance between crops and the level of detection of contamination to other crops in the trials conducted, besides submitting the detailed minutes of its last meeting. The court will hear the matter again in the second week of August.

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### ***13. Protests Against GM Seeds in Orissa***

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<http://www.thestatesman.net/page.news.php?clid=9&theme=&usrsess=1&id=198499>

BHUBANESWAR, April. 7: Stepping up the protest against genetically modified seeds, a petition signed by 30,000 farmers of the state, intellectuals and activists has been submitted to the state government on the eve of the 'Peoples No Genetic Engineering Day' which is to be observed tomorrow.

The coalition has launched a campaign to observe 8 April as "Peoples No Genetic Engineering Day", and has decided to hold rallies at Kendrapara, Bargarh, Bolangir, Rayagada, Sundargarh, Ganjam, Nayagarh and Sambalpur districts. Letters from 50 sarpanch on their letterheads have been submitted to the agriculture minister asking him to see that Orissa remains free from genetically modified seeds.

Social activists who have been working against introduction of the seeds, said that despite the statement of the agriculture minister Mr. Surendranath Nayak on 22 June 2007 that genetically modified crops will not be allowed into Orissa, the biotech industry and its supporters are making an attempt to introduce Bt Cotton in Orissa with the false promise to farmers that Bt Cotton will result in increased yields.

Bt Cotton seeds are illegally available in the state and illegal cultivation of the crop has been discovered in Patnagarh block of Bolangir district. Field trials of Bt Cotton are being undertaken since 2002-03 as per official information. They alleged that the Bt toxin has already shown its hazardous nature by its adverse impact on the health of the soil, by destroying friendly soil bacteria and also on cattle, which have died in large numbers after grazing on the Bt Cotton

fields.

Cotton is per se a risky crop and the Bt technology has only added to the risks involved by exposing the farmer to the vagaries of the weather, new pests and by increasing the input costs which have spiraled beyond control.

With regards to Orissa, the activists noted that 80 per cent of the farmers are marginal and landless and depend entirely on agriculture for their food and livelihood security. In cotton growing districts of Bolangir, Koraput, and Rayagada there is a disturbing trend of land under cotton cultivation increasing at the expense of land available for food crops. This is a direct threat to the food security of the region.

The State is thoroughly unprepared for this new untested technology, as the State Biotechnology Coordination Committee (SBCC) is yet to hold a single meeting since inception and the District Level Committee (DLC) has been formed in only two districts of Orissa. The campaign has included the tribals also. See this below:

***Tribals Protests against GM seeds: Demand Declaration of Orissa as organic State***

<http://www.thehindu.com/2008/04/09/stories/2008040955870300.htm>

BHUBANESWAR: Over 4000 women, mostly tribals, under the banner of Orissa Nari Samaj (ONS), on Tuesday picked up an innovative idea to give an impetus to their demand that Orissa should be declared as organic state.

They exhibited 500 indigenous paddy varieties collected by them in front of State Assembly to put across the message that the state government would risk the rich flora base of rice species if genetically modified organisms (GMOs) entered the region.

Observing the global action day against Genetic Engineering (GE), the women activists of ONS from different corners of the State, civil society members and students took to the street in the capital city. They shouted slogans against entry of GE technology for the food crops and seed.

"The GE is a new technology which artificially manipulates and transfers genetic material between unrelated organisms. GMOs are potentially hazardous to human health and create irreversible risks for environment," said G. John, Convenor of the Coalition of People's Movement Against GE.

Orissa government had earlier banned bacillus thuringiensis brinjal in the State after a series of meetings with scientists and other civil society groups, Mr. John said.

Ms. Janani Hansdha, spokesperson of ONS, said the government should incorporate in agriculture policy that Orissa would be GE- free organic state.

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***14. UK and Irish Politicians Denounce Canadian Government Agent's dirty tricks over GMOs***

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Prominent politicians condemn Canadian government employee for fraudulent research, disinformation, intimidation of UK and Irish citizens and attempts to sabotage Irish Government policy.

The UK's ex-environment minister, the Rt. Hon. Michael Meacher MP tabled an Early Day Motion (EDM) in the UK Parliament. The EDM succinctly points the finger at the corporate corruption of science, most visible and ruthless when it comes to promoting GM crops. Every part of the corporate structure is complicit, the scientific establishment, the learned journals and big governments, held to ransom by the biotech industry. The EDM refers to Dr. Irina Ermakova's findings, which are very uncomfortable for the biotech industry, and Nature Biotechnology's editor has been roundly condemned for abusing his position in an attempt to undermine her work; the matter is still unresolved]. So is the

controversy surrounding an award-winning paper published in British Food Journal, which turned out to be fraudulent, and one of its authors, a Canadian government agent, has resorted to intimidation to defend the research.

The UK's Chief Scientist [until the end of Dec 2007] Sir David King, an active supporter of GM crops, has remained conspicuously silent on these matters that threaten the very credibility of science and the peer-review process, let alone the integrity of GM research. But 40 scientists from all over the world and two UK Members of Parliament signed an open letter to British Food Journal on 23 January 2008, condemning the Journal for having brought science into disrepute and demanding the withdrawal of the paper and the award.

### **Denounced in Irish Senate, and MEP demands an investigation**

On 6 December, Irish Senator David Norris called on the Leader of the Senate to raise with the Government "the extraordinary interference by an agent of the Canadian Government in political discourse in this country," drawing attention to Meacher's EDM. Senators Dan Boyle (Deputy Leader of the Senate), Deirdre de Burca, Pearse Doherty, and Phil Prendergast have since supported Norris.

Kathy Sinnott MEP (Member of European Parliament) has added her voice to demand an investigation by the European parliament. She said the "covert interference by the Government of Canada is an affront to Irish and UK sovereignty and to the Precautionary Principle which is a cornerstone of EU policy on GM food and farming", and called on the European Parliament "to investigate this scandal," as they have done regarding the CIA's violation of European airspace for illegal torture flights.

"We need a full investigation into the extent of covert influence by foreign governments and corporations on the GM policies and decisions of the Commission, EU member states, and their regulatory bodies," Sinnott said.

For further details you can log on to <http://www.i-sis.org.uk/politiciansDenounceGMOTricks.php>

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## ***15. Protests in Greece***

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The annual International Greek Biotech Conference took place in Athens, organized by Bionova Ltd., the representative of EuropaBio (European biotech corporations' lobby) in Greece. Bionova as a national representative promotes at all levels the Biotech agenda, including GMOs, agrofuels, bio-patents, collaboration of Science & Business, aiming as well to expand in the SE Europe. (For detailed review please read here: <http://www.gmwatch.org/archive2.asp?arcid=8683>) Since the very first conference, counter-action has been generated in Greece from several groups from all over the country including mass demonstrations (see report and video from the 3rd conference here: <http://italy.indymedia.org/news/2006/10/1167490.php>)

This year due to some parallel anti-fascist demonstrations taking place very close to the point of the anti-biotech gathering and the extent of street conflicts between police, fascists and activists, the whole thing got interrupted and focused mostly on action within and outside the conference. (Watch all the fun of the 4th conference in the video here: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=idl8enRKcJ4>)

Further counter-action is already being organised with the aim to inflict the institutionalised status of the Greek representatives of global biotech engines.

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## ***16. The Nordic Region - a GMO-free zone in the future?***

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<http://www.norden.org/webb/news/news.asp?id=7628&lang=6>

<http://members.tripod.com/~ngin/151201b.htm>

"The Nordic Region should be declared free of genetically modified organisms and the Nordic countries should join other European states like Austria, Greece and Poland, which have already declared themselves GMO-free zones," according to a proposal by the Left-Socialist Green Group (VSG) on the Nordic Council. The growing number GMO-free zones are due to widespread scepticism about the health aspects of genetically modified food products, according to the Group. "Research suggests that the use of genetically modified products has a negative impact on health," the VSG notes. It is important to maintain biological diversity. The alternative, according to the group, is to have only a few genetically modified species and for multinational companies to enjoy a monopoly of them. The VSG is calling on the Nordic governments to work towards a GMO-free region.

"It would provide a boost to sustainable development and underpin the positive environmental and health image the Nordic Region aims to project," the Group says. Nordic MPs have long been interested in the question of genetically modified organisms. The Centre Group on the Nordic Council previously proposed stricter labelling of genetically modified products, for example.

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## ***17. GM Crops Have Failed***

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The following article explains **how the GM crops have failed farmers** across globe on various counts which the Biotech companies use to propel their sales of these GM seeds. Only two examples have been presented in this article under each category to dispel their claims.

"GM crops have higher yields, improved performance, and greatly reduce the use of agrochemicals. Farmers like them, because they increase income." Lim Li Ching and Jonathan Matthews debunk these myths, documenting the failures of GM crops around the world.

### **Lower yields**

Thousands of controlled trials have shown significantly decreased yields with GM crops. A study based on 8,200 trials of soya varieties in US universities in 1998, reports yield drags between top RR varieties and top conventional varieties averaging 6.7%. In some areas, the best conventional varieties produced yields on average 10% higher than RR varieties sold by the same seed companies.

In May 2000, the results of a two-year study by Nebraska University's Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources showed RR soya yielded 6% less than their closest non-GM relatives and 11% less than high-yielding non-GM varieties. The yield penalty was attributed to the gene insertion process. Similar yield drags have been reported since 1997.

\*In 1997, the University of Purdue found that transgenic soya varieties yielded on average 12-20% less than unmodified varieties grown at the same locations.

\*Research published in 1998 by the University of Arkansas and Cyanamid revealed reduced profit levels and lower yields for GM soya and cotton compared with unmodified varieties. \*The University of Wisconsin found GM soya yields from the 1998 harvest lower than non-modified varieties in over 80% of cases in trials across nine US states. In Iowa, a 1999 survey reported an average RR-soybean yield reduction of 4% in over 365 fields. \*A review of 40 trials of soya varieties in the north central region of the US in 1999 found a mean 4% yield drag in RR soya. The greater expense of GM seeds and increased herbicide costs can already hit farmers' pockets. Add to these the costs of yield drag and technology fees, and it is bad news for profitability. For example, the added costs for soya producers can be more than 12% of gross income per acre.

The first farm-level economic analysis of Bt corn, demonstrates less net profit, lower corn prices, and lost corn exports, questioning whether planting GM corn is worth the cost. From 1996-2001, American farmers paid at least \$659 million in price premiums to plant Bt corn, while boosting their harvest by only 276 million bushels - worth \$567 million in economic gain. The bottom line for farmers is a net loss of \$92 million - about \$1.31 per acre. Furthermore, the US has foregone about 350 million bushels of corn export sales to the European Union since 1996/97 because the EU doesn't want GMOs. This is thus part of a triple negative for farmers -- lost corn exports, lower corn prices and less net profit from Bt corn. In addition, while transgenic cotton varieties may make pest control easier, they are not always worth the added expense when it comes to yield and fibre quality. Research by the University of Arkansas shows that many conventionals are the highest yielding varieties. Comparing the economics of a Bollgard/Roundup Ready variety with a conventional variety, "in a year when insect pressure was low the farmer spent about \$10 an acre less for insect control with the conventional variety than he did with the more expensive stacked gene variety".

And can we put a price tag on the environment? While, research points to the popularity of GM crops with many North American farmers because of their "convenience", a University of Nebraska report shows that farmers are using the technology to needlessly destroy weeds to get a "weed-free" field. The study demonstrates not only reduced profits, but also destruction of biodiversity.

For full details, log on to <http://www.i-sis.org/GMcropsfailed.php>

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## ***18. South Australia to stay GM free***

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<http://www.news.com.au/heraldsun/story/0,21985,23180632-5005961,00.html>

SOUTH Australia will maintain a ban on genetically modified (GM) crops, a move welcomed by environmental groups but widely criticized by the scientific community.

Premier Mike Rann and Agriculture Minister Rory McEwen said the current moratorium, due to expire at the end of April, would be continued to maintain the state's clean and green image. The decision went against a report from South Australia's GM Crops Advisory Committee, which recommended lifting the ban across the state, except on Kangaroo Island.

It was also in contrast to the approval given to canola farmers in Victoria and NSW to start growing GM crops this year, but in line with similar moves by Western Australia and Tasmania. Scientists said the decision was "astonishing" and "lacking courage and vision".

Ian Edwards, advisory group chairman with AusBiotech, Australia's biotechnology industry's peak organization, said the move went against market realities.

"They have instead pandered to fringe groups and have rendered a great disservice to the farmers of South Australia," Dr Edwards said.

Mr. Rann said the Government was yet to be convinced that allowing GM crops would have a positive impact on marketing the state's food and wine to important export destinations around the world. "It makes sense for us to maintain our current position until there's more certainty regarding the impact of exporting GM grains," he said. "We must be mindful that there's simply no turning back once the moratorium has been lifted. Maintaining the moratorium now will enable us to monitor developments elsewhere."

South Australian Greens MP, Mark Parnell said the decision was to be applauded, but warned that contamination of SA farms from GM crops grown in Victoria was now a threat. "GM seeds will not respect state borders," he said. "International experience shows that it is impossible to successfully segregate GM and non-GM crops."

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## ***19. In France, Ban on GM corn is official Now!***

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<http://newsinfo.inquirer.net/breakingnews/world/view/20080209-117806/French-ban-on-strain-of-GM-corn-becomes-official>

PARIS –on 9<sup>th</sup> February 2008, France officially imposed a ban on a strain of genetically modified (GM) corn produced by the US agribusiness giant Monsanto, with the publication of an agriculture ministry order in the state's official journal. "The growing of corn seeds ... derived from genetically modified corn strain MON810 is prohibited on [French] territory," read the order signed by Agriculture Minister Michel Barnier.

Monsanto's 810 maize had been the only GM crop grown in France, but the French government last month began moving to ban its further use after a watchdog authority said it had "serious doubts" about the product in a report that has been controversial even among the scientists who put it together. The agriculture ministry order said the ban would remain in force until a decision was taken whether to renew the authorization for the GM strain to be sold on the French market. French corn farmers have already said they planned to challenge the ban in court. With the law requiring a hearing within three weeks, corn producers could still plant the variety of GM corn this spring if France's highest administrative court supports their appeal, said Luc Esprit, director of the Association General of Corn Producers. The association estimates that without a ban some 100,000 hectares (250,000 acres) of the GM corn would be planted this year, up from 22,000 hectares in 2007. It estimates the ban would cause farmers losses of some 10 million euros (\$15 million).

France last month invoked an EU safeguard procedure to temporarily bar Monsanto's 810 maize.

It followed a report by France's Provisional High Authority on GM Organisms that said it had "serious doubts" as to the safety of MON810. It pointed to what it described as "a certain number of new scientific facts relating to a negative impact on flora and fauna." Chairman Jean-Francois Le Grand, who also holds a seat in the Senate, said evidence had emerged that Mon 810 had an effect on insects, a species of earthworm and micro-organisms. There was also concern that wind-borne pollen from MON810 could travel much further than previously thought -- perhaps as much as hundreds of miles (kilometers), said Le Grand. The government action also followed French anti-globalization activist Jose Bove -- who has been convicted of ripping up GM crops in southern France -- launching a hunger strike to press for a year-long ban on genetically modified crops

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## ***20. UK Chief Scientist gets his GM facts wrong***

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Professor David King has appeared in the UK Media on several occasions recently putting forward the view that genetically modified crops are essential tools to tackle future population-driven food shortages, as well as misrepresenting the potential benefits of GM crops. On the BBC's Today Programme on 27 November he cited a number of examples:

- Plant pheromones used to attract pests away from maize crops on the shores of Lake Victoria in Kenya;
- Removal of food allergies, for example gluten from wheat; and The development of drought tolerant crops.

Unfortunately for Professor King, all of these proved to be poor examples to use.

- The project by Lake Victoria is not in fact a GM crop at all but a trial in companion planting.
- The removal of gluten from wheat would render it very poor for bread making, and sufferers of gluten allergies would still have to be very careful to avoid the non-GM wheat that would still be on the market. The Government's GM Science review, which Professor King chaired, was realistic about the chances of reducing the risks to people who are allergic to peanuts: "Efforts to remove the allergen from peanuts would be beneficial to a substantial fraction of the population whose sensitivity to the protein can expose them to life threatening situations and work to this end is underway (Bannon et al.2001). Although this would be beneficial, it is not simple to achieve. Peanut contains potentially more than 20 allergenic proteins. The removal of one or two of them is unlikely to make the peanut safe to eat for all peanut allergy sufferers."

See: [www.gmsciencedebate.org.uk/report/pdf/gmsci-report1-pt3.pdf](http://www.gmsciencedebate.org.uk/report/pdf/gmsci-report1-pt3.pdf)

In addition, people would have to be very wary about non-GM allergenic peanuts that would still be on the market.

- Professor King was also guilty of exaggerating the progress made in developing GM drought tolerant crops, which is proving difficult.

Professor King's optimism is not shared by Professor Ossama El-Tayeb, PhD, Professor Emeritus of Industrial Biotechnology at the University of Cairo:

"I read with interest and respect Friderike Oehler's message and fully appreciate her concerns and am similarly convinced of the potential of 'alternatives'. I wish to add that transgenicity for drought tolerance and other environmental stresses (or, for that matter, biological nitrogen fixation) are too complex to be attainable in the foreseeable future, taking into consideration our extremely limited knowledge of biological systems and how genetic/metabolic functions operate. Those who propagate the ideas that any biological function could be genetically manipulated are optimists who are probably victims of a consortium of 'arrogant' scientists and greedy businesses who have strong control on policy making and the media.

Having said that, I feel we should not lose hope of reaching such noble goals and should continue to fund such research whose fruits may be reaped by a future generation. These goals have been used by the proponents of currently available genetically modified organisms (GMOs) under the control of big business, who propose that GM crops will alleviate poverty soon, while in fact currently available ones mostly contribute negatively to poverty alleviation and food security and positively to the stock market. The holders of intellectual property rights for present day GM crops keep teasing us about the potential of GMOs resistant to abiotic stresses and the like while doing nothing about developing such crops for this generation. These are simply not easily exploitable in a business market and are accordingly not on their agenda. Basic research in this area is being funded almost exclusively by public funds."

See: [www.fao.org/biotech/logs/C14/280307.htm](http://www.fao.org/biotech/logs/C14/280307.htm)

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## ***21. GM crops costly, warns Canadian farmer leader***

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February 6 2008

<http://www.brisbanetimes.com.au/news/national/gm-crops-costly-canadian-warns/2008/02/05/1202090421381.html>

FARMERS who embrace genetically modified crops will become slaves to biotechnology companies, the vice-president of Canada's National Farmers Union has warned Australia's agricultural sector.

Terry Boehm, a canola grower who is on a four-state speaking tour, said the introduction of genetically modified canola in his homeland more than a decade ago had impoverished farmers and led to an exodus from the land. Biotechnology companies charged farmers a very high price, he said, and switching to GM had cost Canada its European market.

Bans on growing modified canola in NSW and Victoria will end in a month, making the planting of such crops possible for the first time in Australia.

Mr. Boehm said it had been impossible in Canada to segregate modified and conventional canola. The conventional canola was deemed GM because of cross-contamination.

Mr. Boehm, whose tour is sponsored by Greenpeace and the Network of Concerned Farmers, said he had stockpiled conventional seed and did not have to deal with biotechnology companies. Farmers in Canada using modified canola had costs about three times higher than his per hectare, Mr. Boehm said, but their yields were the same.

The National Farmers Federation supported ending the NSW ban on modified canola, arguing conventional crops would be protected and access to GM was needed to compete internationally. Supporters of modified canola say it increases yields, reduces herbicide use and is more profitable.