



Monthly Bulletin
on Genetic Engineering
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G E National News

1. Gag on anti-GM voice

<http://indiatoday.intoday.in/site/Story/85389/LATEST%20HEADLINES/Gag+on+anti-GM+voice.html>

New Delhi - The new proposal to jail anyone questioning the safety of genetically modified (GM) crops has yet to become a law. But the government appears to have already started muzzling anti-GM voices, environmental activists have alleged.

A regional government official and a professor of genetics from Italy - both important members of the GM-free movement - have been allegedly denied visa by the Indian government.

The two were supposed to speak at an international conference on "genetically modified organism-free movement" organised by the Research Foundation for Science, Technology and Ecology in Delhi on Tuesday.

Maria Grazia Mammucini is the director of the regional government of Tuscany's agency for agriculture, while Marcello Buiatti is a professor of genetics at the University of Florence and a member of the European Network of Independent Scientists.

They have played a key role in getting regions in Europe declared GM-free and were supposed to share their experience at the meeting.

Vandana Shiva, who heads the organisation hosting the meeting, alleged: "The visa has been denied at the behest of the agriculture ministry which is headed by pro-GM politician Sharad Pawar. Both Mammucini and Buiatti have valid papers, including an invitation from us. There was no reason they should have been denied entry into India." "When I contacted the Indian embassy, the official there told me that he needed permission from the agriculture ministry for issuing the visas," Shiva added.

"This arbitrary action has denied the Indian public a chance to hear Prof. Buiatti who has shown how genetic engineering is unreliable and risky." Shiva criticised Pawar for his alleged move to get the recent moratorium on Bt brinjal lifted.

"It seems the PM (Manmohan Singh) has said (environment minister) Jairam Ramesh can't have

the last word on Bt brinjal. The fact is that the people have had the last word on this subject and politicians can't be allowed to undo that," she said.

Shiva said the proposal to set up the Biotechnology Regulatory Authority of India was aimed at deregulating the biotech industry and not at safeguarding biosafety. The existing biosafety framework, she said, was good enough. It only needed transparent implementation.

2. Monsanto on the Mat?

<http://indiatoday.intoday.in/site/Story/86939/India/Bt+cotton+has+failed+admits+Monsanto.html>
<http://www.business-standard.com/india/news/setback-for-bt-cotton-main-pest-develops-resistance/387703/>
<http://www.hindustantimes.com/Bt-cotton-flunks-pest-resistance-test-in-Gujarat/H1-Article1-515648.aspx>

For the first time anywhere in the world, biotech agriculture giant Monsanto has admitted that insects have developed resistance to its Bt cotton crop. Field monitoring in parts of Gujarat has discovered that the Bt crop is no longer effective against the pink bollworm pest there.

Monsanto's admission has been described by GM Freeze as "predictable" and that it "could be disastrous for poor farmers"

Resistance has been confirmed in one major insect pest of cotton – the pink bollworm – in four districts of Gujarat. This is one of the first cases where widespread breakdown of GM insect resistance has taken place. Reports also suggest that sucking insect pests, which are not controlled by the Bt toxins genetically engineered into the cotton, are also increasing. Yields of Bt cotton are reported to be down by 8.5% and pesticide costs up by one third.

Monsanto are seeking to blame farmers for the problem, claiming they failed to provide non-GM refuges in cotton crops which are designed to prevent resistant bollworms growing in numbers. Monsanto's solution is another Bt cotton, this time containing two resistance genes, and to apply more chemicals. One Indian campaigner described this approach as "a vicious circle that Indian farmers have got into".

Agricultural scientists and activists say Monsanto's advice is "ridiculous". The Bollgard II product has no additional toxin to combat pink bollworm, it is simply that as a newer product Bollgard II will take longer for the pest to develop resistance. Anyway, the Bt toxin is only active for 90 days, while pink bollworm is a late season pest.

Commenting on the events in India, Pete Riley of GM Freeze said: "The existence of pest resistant to Bt cotton is predictable. It mirrors previous experiences with chemical pesticides."

The revelation has not surprised environment action groups. "This is the pattern Monsanto has been following everywhere. Once Bollgard 1 fails, they start pushing Bollgard 2 and tell farmers to apply more pesticides. This is a vicious circle that Indian cotton farmers have got into," Devinder Sharma of Forum for Biotechnology and Food Safety said.

Not only has Bt cotton been rendered ineffective, it has also led to detection of some new pests never before reported from India. It is toxic only to bollworm and does not control any other pests of cotton. "New sucking pests have emerged as major pests causing significant economic losses", the report says.

At the same time, productivity of cotton has fallen from 560 kg lint per hectare in 2007 to 512 kg lint per hectare in 2009.

And pesticide expenditure has gone up from from Rs 597 crore in 2002 to Rs 791 crore in 2009.

3. Is this a profit ploy?

<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Bt-cotton-failure-a-profit-ploy/articleshow/5673195.cms>

Nwe Delhi: Did declining profitability prompt Monsanto's announcement that its Bt cotton variety had failed to beat the pink bollworm pest in four districts in Gujarat and could this be part of a ploy to promote its second generation GM cotton variety? The Union government thinks so.

In an internal note, that TOI accessed, the ministry of environment and forests said, "It appears that this (announcing the failure of Bt cotton) could be a business strategy to phase out single gene events (the current variety) and promote double (stacked) genes which would fetch higher price."

4. India up for Sale!

Pushpa M Bhargava

<http://bit.ly/aK1sn9>

The recent historic moratorium on Bt brinjal by Jairam Ramesh, minister of environment and forests, has

created a network of citizens' organisations around the country that have risen spontaneously from the ground, and have prevented the country's agriculture becoming devoid of its diversity and moving in the direction of control by multinational corporations (MNCs).

These corporations have strong links with the government of the United States of America US, and their sole objectives are (a) to make as much money as possible by any means, and (b) to eventually have total control over Indian agriculture, using every ruse known to the world of conmen. Unlike the government of India, they are fully aware that whosoever controls seed and agrochemical business in India controls its agriculture. And whosoever controls our agriculture controls India and its food security, for 62 per cent Indians derive their total sustenance from agriculture and, in our country, food security, food sovereignty, agriculture security, farmers security, and security of the rural sector, are synonymous and important components of national security and autonomy. If Bt brinjal had been approved, India would have, in course of time, ceased to be, de facto, an independent country and we, its citizens, would have had to start fighting the third war of independence which we would have eventually won, for truth always wins in the long run.

It is unfortunate that our government - our politicians and bureaucrats (exception granted) - and the rich and the powerful in the country, seem to be siding with the MNCs (read US), in their attempt to acquire control over our agriculture. This is reminiscent of India being ruled by the British through a class of Indians. Only the structure, colour and strategy of this class seem to have changed, while Britain has been replaced by the US plus the MNCs.

5. GM Contamination at the FAO!

<http://www.radiomundoreal.fm/GM-Contamination-at-the-FAO>

The FAO is "GM contaminated" due to its closeness with international seed companies, and that can be considered a "tragedy" for humanity.

This is what Pat Mooney, Executive Director at the ETC Group said yesterday in Guadalajara, at the activities parallel to the Conference on Agriculture Biotechnologies in Developing Countries.

Mooney stated that over the last few months, 1500 social organizations around the world wrote to the FAO to warn on the “crime against humanity” suffered by Mexico with GM maize crops, and the answer of the FAO was that they couldn’t intervene in a “national issue”.

“And then the FAO comes to Mexico, comes to Guadalajara and has a conference on biotechnology on crops”, the activist regretted. In addition, the FAO prevented Mexican organizations, such as the National Union of Regional Peasant Organizations, to participate.

Mooney also talked about how world crises are an opportunity for big industries, for Public-Private Partnership and an opportunity for transnational corporations to control the sector.

“Over the last 35 years, since the last food crisis, we’ve gone from about 7000 different seed companies in the world, providing seeds to farmers,

down to four companies that control more than half of the world seed market”, Mooney said. The top ten companies control two thirds of the global commercial seed market and the most important chemical companies went from 65 to 9, which today control 90 per cent of the global pesticides market. “And in the same way, big companies have taken control of the veterinary medicine market, taken control of livestock genetics”, he added.

“Have you noticed how successful they have been? In 1996 there were 400 million hungry people. Last year, during the last food summit, there were a billion hungry people. They have been very successful.”, Mooney said ironically. Mooney believes that if Mexican farmers lose the fight in defense of maize, the consequences would be fatal. “If you lose this fight in the centre of diversity of maize, then we will lose the centres of diversity around the world. You are not just fighting in defense of maize, you are not just fighting Monsanto, you are fighting the new ‘biomasters’. We all depend on you”, he concluded

GE National News

6. Scientists oppose deal with Monsanto

<http://bit.ly/aGVhGg>

Karachi: Pakistan’s top scientists have expressed concerns regarding government’s plans to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with giant American multinational Monsanto for the introduction of “insect-resistant” Bt-cotton, saying that it could harm the interest of growers.

“There is a need to get sound, critical and scientific input from experts in the country before signing such a deal,” Dr Anwer Naseem, chairman National Commission on Biotechnology, said yesterday.

“I have no idea whom the government has consulted.”

The government plans to sign a deal with Monsanto next month aimed at introducing Bt-Cotton and other advanced seed technologies in Pakistan.

7. Farmers Say ‘No’ to GM Wheat

<http://www.newswire.ca/en/releases/archive/February2010/09/c8060.html>

Ottawa, Montreal, Washington, Tokyo And Sydney - 233 consumer and farmer groups in 26 countries have joined the “Definitive Global Rejection of GM Wheat” statement to stop the commercialization of genetically modified (GM) wheat and remind the biotechnology corporation Monsanto that genetically modifying this major crop is not acceptable to farmers or consumers. (1)

The 233 groups signed the rejection statement first launched by 15 Australian, Canadian and U.S. farmer and consumer groups in June 2009.

“The big push is on from Monsanto to pave the way for GM wheat but the reality is that strong and widespread opposition from farmers and consumers in Australia and across the world is here to stay,” said Laura Kelly from Greenpeace Australia Pacific.

8. Ban on GM Canola Still On!

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http://www.weeklytimesnow.com.au/article/2010/02/10/156541_grain-and-hay.html

THE South Australian Government has rejected calls to follow Western Australia's lead and lift its ban on genetically modified canola.

The matter will not become an election issue when South Australia goes to the polls on March 20 either, as the State Opposition has said it supports the ban.

The West Australian Government's decision last month to lift its ban on the commercial production of GM canola left South Australia as the only mainland state not to sanction the technology.

9. Bulgaria Bends under Public Pressure

<http://www.forexyard.com/en/news/Bulgaria-approves-law-to-ban-GMO-crops-2010-03-18T124907Z>
<http://www.ipsnews.net/news.asp?idnews=50411>

SOFIA - Bulgaria's parliament voted on Thursday to tighten a law that effectively banned cultivation of genetically modified (GM) crops for scientific and commercial reasons in response to public fears. Campaigning by environmental groups and the general public has weakened the determination of the Bulgarian government to allow the cultivation of genetically modified (GM) crops in this country.

In January 2010, the Bulgarian parliament voted, on a first reading, legislation allowing the release of GM organisms into the environment. But as the law awaited final passage, the Environmental Parliamentary Committee came under public pressure to accept a five-year moratorium on GM cultivation and a ban on testing near organic fields and beehives.

Environmentalists are now pushing for the new legislation to be dropped completely, rather than pass it with a five-year moratorium.

The ruling centre-right GERB party decided to drop a planned moratorium on GMO production because the new law would keep the European Union member GMO-free, deputies said.

"There will be no field on the country's territory where GMOs can be cultivated," Kostadin Yazov of GERB's parliamentary group, said.

Non-government organisations, farmers and citizens have rallied for over two months against the government's initial plans to replace a ban with a licensing regime, which they feared would flood the Balkan country with GMO crops.

Authorising GMOs for consumption, processing or cultivation in Europe is a politically charged subject with many openly hostile to what they call "Frankenstein foods."

10. Is GM Losing Ground?

Immediate release, 23 February 2010

The latest data from the ISAAA on GM crops around the world [1] reveals that seven out of 25 countries had reduced GM cultivation areas in 2009 and another remained static. The data from the industry-funded group reveals that no new countries grew GM crops during this period.

The combined area of all GM crops in 2009 covered just 2.7% of all agricultural land. [2] Very little of this production went directly to feed people, as most went into animal feed (GM maize, soy and canola), industrial scale biofuels (GM maize, soy and canola) or to produce cotton.

The expansion of GM maize in Brazil alone accounted for over 60% of the 9 million hectares increase in GM cultivation area in 2009. In seven other countries the area under GM crops actually fell in 2009 (compared with 2008), including two of what ISAAA describe as "mega" countries:

- *China's GM cultivation area was down 3%;
- *Paraguay's GM cultivation area was down 19%.

The only other country with significant growth in area was India, where Bt cotton cultivation expanded. However the biotech industry received a major setback recently when the Indian government placed a moratorium on the approval of GM Bt brinjal (aubergine) for commercial production pending further scientific assessment on safety and cross pollination. The decision followed months of mass protests throughout the country. [3]

Globally the same six countries continue to dominate GM cropping: US, Brazil, Argentina, India, Canada and China grew nearly 95% of

all GM crops, while the remaining production area in 20 other countries remains low.

*Germany's GM cultivation (where a ban was introduced in 2009) was down 100%;

*The Czech Republic's GM cultivation was down 31%;

*Romania's GM cultivation was down 57%;

*Slovakia's GM cultivation was down 54%.

The area in Poland under GM remained static in 2009. Five other EU countries have banned the cultivation of Monsanto's GM maize. [8]

"The ISAAA report reveals that in many countries the appeal of GM crops is waning, and the growth they claim is heavily dependent on a handful of countries. Claims that GM crops are benefitting poor farmers do not stand up to close scrutiny.

"What the world needs is a rethink about how we apply our money and brain power. We need to shift away from expensive GM models geared to intensive, high carbon production systems towards agroecological methods that use local natural resources and harness the combined knowledge of farmers and scientists to produce crops without wrecking the planet."

11. Fury as EU approves GM potato

<http://www.independent.co.uk/environment/green-living/fury-as-eu-approves-gm-potato-1915833.html>

*Critics claim plant could spread antibiotic-resistant diseases to humans

BASF's genetically modified Amflora potato, which has just been approved by the European Commission, contains genes that are resistant to antibiotics

The introduction of a genetically modified potato in Europe risks the development of human diseases that fail to respond to antibiotics, it was claimed last night.

German chemical giant BASF this week won approval from the European Commission for commercial growing of a starchy potato with a gene that could resist antibiotics – useful in the fight against illnesses such as tuberculosis.

The antibiotics could become "extremely important" to treat otherwise multi-resistant infections and tuberculosis, the European Medicines Authority (EMA) warned. Drug resistance is part of the explanation for the resurgence of TB, which infects eight million people worldwide every year.

12. Growth Hormone Cut to Size!

<http://www.bioscienceresource.org/news/article.php?id=45>

The fight over rbGH (recombinant bovine growth hormone) continues, even under new ownership.

After acquiring rbGH from Monsanto, Elanco (part of Eli Lilly) has stepped up efforts to convince milk processors and the wider food industry that milk from rbGH-injected cows is safe. Central to their new campaign is a paper, commissioned through PR company Porter-Novelli, from eight prominent experts and academics in medicine and dairy science (Recombinant bovine somatotropin (rbST): a safety assessment). . It argues strongly for the benefits and safety of rbGH milk and has been widely distributed by Elanco. According to a rebuttal circulated by a number of consumer advocacy organisations, however, the paper misrepresents the position of various medical bodies (1).

According to Rick North of Oregon PSR "Elanco's numerous false statements and misrepresentations on endorsing organizations are only the tip of the iceberg. The entire report is riddled with similar inaccurate, misleading claims about rBGH itself."

13. BRIC to Build Food Security

http://www.ptinews.com/news/584365_BRIC-could-ensure-global-food-safety—Paw

Moscow, Mar 27 (PTI) The BRIC grouping has a huge potential in combating hunger and ensuring global food security, agriculture minister Sharad Pawar said here today.

"I feel that BRIC (Brazil, Russia, India and China) has huge potential for cooperation in combating hunger and ensuring food security through coordinated approaches in modernising farming and inducting environment-friendly technologies," Pawar said at the end of his three-day visit to the Russian

capital during which he attended the maiden session of the BRIC agriculture ministers.

The summit of the leaders of the four fastest emerging economies on April 16 in Brazil will be briefed on the outcome of the first-ever meeting of the farm ministers

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 educational materials.