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PRESS RELEASE

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Voting Out Democracy and Voting In Corporatocracy: *Bt Brinjal Moratorium should not reversed*

- **Ministry of Environment and Forests had issued a moratorium on the introduction of Bt Brinjal (a genetically engineered crop) in February 2010**
- **A letter from Deccan Development Society to Shri Sharad Pawar, Agriculture Minister challenges the petition of the FABE for the removal of moratorium on Bt Brinjal**
- **The letter highlight that pseudo scientists such as Dr Kameswara Rao and the GE industry have hidden facts from the Government of India and have also claimed publically that Indian farmers do not know how to grow cotton.**
- **GE Industry claims that small farms and farmers cannot cope with GE technology. Monsanto says 75 acres a must in Argentina.**
- **American Academy of Environmental Medicine (AAEM) has called for a moratorium on GM foods, long-term independent studies, and labeling.**

The petition from the Foundation for Biotechnology Awareness and Education (FABE), addressed to you demanding a reversal of the moratorium on Bt Brinjal is a pernicious piece of advocacy. What it actually requests you is to vote out democracy and vote in corporate control.” says P.V. Satheesh, Director, Deccan Development Society in the opening lines of his letter to Shri Sharad Pawar, Union Agriculture Minister. The letter dated 26.4.2010 attempts to highlight the dangerous designs of India's biotech peddlers seeking to continually push the Genetic Engineering into India's agriculture. The reported letter to the reverse the Bt Brinjal being one such action.

The letter to the Agriculture Minister points out that fact of the overwhelming majority of the people in Europe, Africa, Asia and parts of Latin America who constitute more than 95% of the world population have refused to eat genetically engineered foods has been completely hidden from you by pseudo scientists such as Dr Kameswara Rao in their

appeal. It states that infact Dr. Rao, in a forum on biotechnology held in Tirupati, AP, a few years ago, had openly declared that Indian farmers do not know how to grow cotton!! Now he is saying that Indian people do not know how to eat food.

In contrast there is mounting evidence of the failure of GE crops in many parts of the world brings to light that even in the even in the USA, the home of GE crops, there was no reduction in the use of pesticides during 1995-2001. This is critical as the GE industry claims this to be a upward selling point for the promotion of GE seeds. However, the statistics of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) clearly contradict this. As far as crop yields were concerned, soybeans, a major target of the GE industry, the yields actually declined form 42 Bushels/acre to 39.5 Bushels/acre between 1994 and 2009!

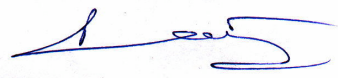
It has also been hidden by the promoters of GE crops that Warangal District of AP wherein farmers have reported that the *Raasi* cotton they had planted in 2000 had given them yields upto 14 qtls/acre vis a vis 10 qtls/acre yield they got in 2004 when they panted ***Raasi Bt cotton*** seeds. The same trend is reported by a Nebraska University study in 2007 which reported a yield loss of between 7% and 11% for GE Soy in comparison with the best non GE hybrids that the farmers planted. A year later Kansas University reported that its studies had confirmed that pre GE soy yields were 10% higher than GE soy yields.

In India, the story of Bt cotton on Indian farmland is a cloak and dagger story of how the seed industry led aggression of Monsanto, formed itself into a cartel and denied non Bt cotton seeds to the Indian farmer. DDS's multilocational studies over the last six years in Andhra Pradesh as well as many other studies by respected scientists in Karnataka and Vidarbha have illustrated how farmers, especially the small and the poor, the beneficiaries of Dr Rao's crocodile tears, have suffered extraordinary losses, damages to their health and their soil and have lost their livestock to the toxic effect of Bt Cotton. Hundreds of farmers both in the Warangal District of Andhra Pradesh and in the Vidarbha region of Maharashtra had to end their lives by committing suicides. This is the reality of the **multiple benefits** that Bt cotton has brought on the small farmers of India. In fact the genetic engineering industry has designed its own epistemology to explain away this situation. They say that the small farmers **cannot cope with this technology** Then how big should a farmer be to **cope** with the GE technology? Monsanto's own study in Argentina fixed it as a **minimum holding of 75 hectares!**. Respected Minisiter, would we want all the less than 75 hectare holding farmers pariahs of farming? If we did so, 99% of Indian farmers should not farm GE at all.

The American Academy of Environmental Medicine (AAEM) **called for a moratorium on GM foods, long-term independent studies, and labeling**. AAEM's position paper stated, "Several animal studies indicate serious health risks associated with GM food," including infertility, immune problems, accelerated aging, insulin regulation, and changes in major organs and the gastrointestinal system. **They conclude, "There is more than a casual association between GM foods and adverse health effects. There is causation,"** as defined by recognized scientific criteria.

DDS' experience after five years of consistent community based research on Bt cotton in three districts of Andhra Pradesh have pointed out to the increase in soil toxicity, death of cattle and skin allergies and breathing problems amongst cotton pickers as three consistent trends. The letter to Shri Sharad Pawar provides detailing on each of these findings.

The Open Letter to the Agriculture Minister reiterates the need to tread with great caution. It states that *“On GE the only caution we must exercise is to be constantly vigilant against the corporate science that constantly tries to push the envelope no matter in the process they subvert principles of science or the principles of democracy.”*



[p v satheesh]
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Encl:
Open letter to Shri Sharad Pawar, Union Minister for Agriculture, Government of India