

Behind India's decision to authorize GMO field trials

India's Environment Minister Veerappa Moily has done the right thing by allowing field trials of genetically modified (GM) cotton, maize, rice and castor lines ahead of the new kharif planting season. The Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee (GEAC) had given the go-ahead for these trials on March 22 last year. That decision, however, was kept on hold by Jayanthi Natarajan, then environment minister, on grounds of an ongoing public interest litigation (PIL) in the Supreme Court demanding a ban on open field tests of GM crops. Moily has rightly pointed out that the Court has not imposed an embargo and the mere existence of a PIL cannot be a ground for not permitting field trials. Moreover, the GEAC is the official biotech regulator constituted under the Environment Protection Act. To overturn its recommendations is tantamount to going against your own ministry; which is what Jairam Ramesh did by unilaterally announcing a 'moratorium' on the commercialisation of Bt brinjal.

Read the full original article: [Biotech blues](#)