

India should not rush to decide on GM crops without rational public debate

The [public debates](#) on GM began with the unannounced entry of Bt cotton in Gujarat, where the farmers had grown 21,000 acres of Bt cotton. It was an ironic beginning where an act of smuggling inaugurated the transfer of technology. Monsanto had no idea of this development and was as stunned as the government of India. The Bt cotton debate began as a downloaded debate where Indian journalists and movements discovered the implications of such an introduction.

On July 18, the Genetic Engineering and Evaluation Committee gave a green signal for field trials of a whole range of genetically modified crops. This assembly line of crops included rice, mustard, cotton, chickpeas and brinjal. The nature of decisions in such “expert evaluation” committees needs to be discussed. One has to ask how stakeholder sensitive they are in terms of representation. Can a small group of bureaucrats decide for the future? How do they explain the framework of that analysis?

The BJP government, instead of rushing into decisions, must set up a framework of debate. As a democracy, we have to adjudicate between different ideas of farming, evaluate different kinds of responsibility, ethics and accountability. Bowdlerising GM crops is the worst thing any government can do. In its urge to satisfy the corporation, it cannot ignore the needs of farmers, the future and the ideals of our civilisation.

Read the full, original article: [Harvest of controversy](#)