

Reflecting internal rift, Indian government puts field trials for 15 GM crops on hold

The battle over testing of genetically modified crops in India took a new turn this week with the Bharatiya Janata party-led government [putting field trials on hold](#). The move reverses the previous Congress party-led government's push for GM trials, which had resulted in approvals in the past few months for rice, maize, wheat and chickpea crops.

This week's announcement came after the Swadeshi Jagran Manch (Forum for National Awakening) and the Bharatiya Kisan Sangh (Indian Farmers Association), two grassroots groups affiliated to the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), a Hindu nationalist outfit that supports the BJP, met environment minister Prakash Javdekar to reiterate their opposition to holding GM trials. "If a country's food production becomes overly dependent on seeds and other inputs from a handful of such companies, will it not compromise its food security?" said the Manch in a press statement.

The biotech industry responded with dismay to the news. Stocks of Monsanto India [slipped](#). An association of leading biotech companies in India [criticised](#) the government's decision as "anti-science, anti-domestic research recommendations which seem motivated to kill the biotechnology sector in India."

These approvals are now on hold until the new government decides what to do. Elected on a mandate for economic growth, Narendra Modi's administration is not expected to be particularly friendly to environmental groups. But on the issue of GM crops environmentalists appear to be on the same page as the nationalist groups that support the BJP. This unlikely convergence seems particularly ironic in the light of a recent [report](#) by an Indian intelligence agency that names anti-GM groups such as Greenpeace India and Gene Campaign as one of the many "anti-national" foreign-funded NGOs hampering India's economic progress.

Read the full, original article: [India puts GM crop trials on hold](#)