

## Ban on Bt brinjal (eggplant) in India unjustified

Five years ago, on 10 February, India's then minister of environment Jairam Ramesh announced a so-called temporary moratorium on the commercial release of Bt Brinjal (a genetically modified or GM crop), which was approved by two Expert Committees (EC I and II), a special committee of 17 experts suggested by then prime minister Manmohan Singh, and finally by a statutory body called the Genetic Engineering Approval Committee (GEAC).

His interventions have not been challenged in a court of law, even to this day, but Ramesh is responsible for setting India's agricultural development agenda back by decades. His fateful decision five years ago was based on nothing but political conditions created by the anti-GM lobby, and had no scientific reasoning. The anti-GM lobby has been politicizing GM crops technology for years, and not just in India.

The environment ministry's temporary but open-ended moratorium had no basis in global scientific consensus. It drew from the playbook of the anti-GM non-governmental organisations (NGOs) that have created a parallel world of science of their own. It ignored India's Inter Academies' report on GM crops because it did not support the case for a ban. It cherry-picked only supportive comments from among more than 60 comments received on Bt brinjal. And it leveraged to its advantage the fact that India's best-known agricultural scientist, M.S. Swaminathan, did not come out unequivocally in favour of Bt Brinjal.

Ramesh's articulated stance that the Bt brinjal moratorium should not be misconstrued as a hindrance to biotech research and development (R&D) is a joke. More than Rs.12,000 crore of investments in biotech R&D have dried up since the moratorium. The scientific community is completely demoralized, as are students.

**Read full, original article:** [Bt Brinjal ban a costly mistake](#)