Bowing to political pressure, India scraps plans to trial GM, insect-resistant, Bt eggplant

[The Indian government] has junked its decision of allowing scientific field trials of transgenic crops including indigenously developed Bt brinjal.

The central regulator, Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee (GEAC), had last year allowed bio-safety research field trials of two new transgenic varieties of Bt brinjal in eight states – Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Tamil Nadu, Odisha and West Bengal – during 2020-23.

The Bhartiya Kisan Sangh (BKS) and other groups had, however, subsequently submitted as many as seven representations to the Centre and different state governments, urging them not to give ‘No Objection Certificate’ (NOC) for biosafety field trials of Bt brinjal.

They had in their representation argued that like any other GM crop, the new Bt Brinjal varieties too would be hazardous for soil and ultimately harm the farmers’ interests.

Presently, Bt cotton is the only GM crop that has been approved for commercial cultivation in the country. In response to other Parliament question, the government in its written response said, “Long term studies conducted by Indian Council of Agricultural Research on the impact of Bt cotton cultivating states has not reported any adverse effect on soil, microflora and animal health.”

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