

Viewpoint: When politics eclipses science — India has botched its regulation of crop biotechnology innovation

Is a government within its rights to squat on an approval for 12 years without valid scientific reasons? Is such a stance compatible with the rule of law?

On February 17, Anil Jaysing Ghanwat, President of the Swatantra Bharat Party, led a group of about 500 farmers in planting unapproved, genetically modified (GM), fruit & shoot borer-resistant Bt brinjal on a little less than a 10th of an acre at his farm at Shrigonda tehsil, in Maharashtra's Ahmednagar district.

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But when the regulatory mechanism fails and the government deprives farmers, consumers and the nation of a useful technology out of political expediency or ideological aversion, what recourse do they have?

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The government's attitude is barely rational. Those who follow lawful procedures are held to a high standard. Even after meeting the standards, they are denied commercial application of their innovations.

It is not just GM cotton or brinjal. The apex regulator approved GM mustard for commercial release in May 2017. But the government has not acted on the advice. (We have no qualms about importing GM canola oil or GM soybean oil, though. Last year, imports of GM soymeal were allowed to quell high poultry feed prices).

[This is an excerpt. Read the original post here.](#)