

Viewpoint: What will it take for India to follow path blazed by so many developing countries and embrace GM crops?

One of the most powerful strategies to practise eco-friendly and sustainable agriculture is to develop and cultivate genetically modified (GM) crops. Progress in the areas of molecular biology and biotechnology in the past six decades led to the introduction and commercialization of GM crops in 1994 [in India].

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[A] moratorium imposed in 2010 by the Ministry of Environment and Forests (Government of India) on the environmental release of Bt-brinjal has adversely affected research, development, testing and release of several GM crops by research institutions in public and private sectors. The cascading effects of such a situation are highly detrimental to the interests of science, research and agriculture. A rapidly developing country like India with a burgeoning population cannot afford to ignore sustainable technologies like GM crops for drought tolerance, nutrient use efficiency, especially that of nitrogen, and thermotolerance.

Countries like USA and Indonesia are already cultivating drought tolerant GM wheat and sugarcane. Nitrogen use efficient GM rice awaits approval for testing in India.

The opposition to the GM crops mainly centres around the "adverse" effects of GM crops on human health and the environment. This is in total contradiction of the global acceptance and consumption of the foods derived from GM crops.

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