

Future of GM crops in India will depend on significant gains in 3 key areas: Ramesh Chand



New Delhi, Jul 6 (PTI) The future of genetically modified (GM) crops in India will depend on those varieties which can address the country's three pressing needs of improving farm efficiency, sustainability and food security, Niti Aayog member Ramesh Chand said on Monday. There is a "positive environment" developing in India as there is no credible study to show any adverse impact of growing Bt cotton in the last 18 years in the country, he said. Currently, Bt cotton is the only GM crop allowed for commercial cultivation in the country. There is a moratorium on Bt brinjal. "I feel that if we want to take advantage of GM crops, we must come out with varieties that have significant gains. It could be in terms of yields or reduction in use of pesticides, among others," Chand said at a book release event. He released a book titled "Socio Economic Impact Assessment of GM Crops – Global Implications Based on Case-Studies from India" by Delhi-based Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS) and said, "it is timely and will help policy makers to make informed decisions." Observing that India right now has three pressing needs of improving farm efficiency, sustainable farm production and food security, Chand said any GM variety which can address these three areas would have more acceptability. "The future of GM crops depends on significant gain in these three areas," Chand said adding that the present environment is not as "hostile and unfriendly" as it used to be in the past for such technology. The gains should be such that the GM crop is accepted and grown in larger areas. For instance Bt cotton in India and soyabean, corn and canola in other countries, he added. Noting that interest still remains in this technology across the world despite severe opposition, the Niti Aayog member said: "The technology of GM crops though started in 1994, no other technology has seen so much uncertainty than this. GM is one such technology which is neither totally accepted nor totally rejected. I wonder why is it so?" He further said the opposition and uncertainty linger for three-four reasons. The first reason is that the technology is so powerful that it has created fear in the minds of people. Secondly, the GM technology came at the time of IT revolution due to which global views were available on internet platforms and the government stayed away from it as the technology was opposed globally, he said. And the third reason is that "the media relied more on activists than on scientists," he added. Sharing about a report on GM crops shared by the Environment Ministry at a high level panel meeting, the Niti Aayog member said there is a strong support for the technology now as it has been adopted in more than 40 countries. In some countries, GM crops are grown in more than 90 per cent of the area and even imports are allowed with caveat of labelling them as GM foods. PTI LUX -- Regards, Laxmi Devi A Special Correspondent Press Trust of India 9810595476/011-41394464 <http://ptinews.com/images/pti.jpg> "We bring the World to you" Disclaimer : This e-mail message may contain proprietary, confidential or legally privileged information for the sole use of the person or entity to whom this message was originally addressed. Please delete this e-mail, if it is not meant for you. ANU

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