

Genetically Modified Seeds

The focus of strengthening capability till now has been on bio-safety and environmental safety infrastructure before commercial release of GM crops. With genetically modified cotton already released for commercial cultivation in the country and more crops being in pipeline and the fact that trade in genetically modified food grains will be increasing in future we would be required to deal with GM seeds/crops on a much larger scale. This, inter-alia, calls for upgradation of the post-release monitoring infrastructure which is the responsibility of Department of Agriculture & Cooperation. In particular, there is a need for capacity building for training of manpower in advance techniques of risk assessment and management of GM crops particularly detection and analysis of LMOs, inspection, monitoring handling of GMO material, quarantine, issues relating to segregation, identity preservation and strengthening of institutions addressing issues of certification. The training of extension personnel and personnel belonging to enforcement agencies like quality enforcement officials of Department of Agriculture of States and personnel from other organizations like Plant Quarantine and Custom officials as well as farmers will go a long way in ensuring post release monitoring and bio-safety.

(ii) Quality Control of GM Seeds and Crops

The present Seed Act does not deal with the quality control of GM seeds as they are generally not notified. It is hoped that the new Seeds Act will take care of this issue however, action against spurious GM seeds can always be taken under the Seeds Control Order and the EPA rules. As the GM seeds are very costly and sometimes farmers have been cheated, there is a strong urgency to develop protocol for determining the presence or absence of genes incorporated in the cultivars. Similarly, the procedure for testing of GM Seeds in the laboratories as well as in the fields is to be developed, strengthened and established with the State Government infrastructure. Strengthening of Seed Testing Laboratories will be undertaken in this context.

Training Requirements

Post release monitoring and the quality assurance of the GM Seeds are the new areas for the State machinery particularly, the extension machinery and the enforcement machinery. Training of these personnel on a large scale is planned to meet the growing demand so that the farmers are not put to any inconvenience and misery.

(source Annual Report 2004-05)