

PRESS RELEASE

Important Decisions Taken in the 110th Meeting of the Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee (GEAC) held on 06.07.2011

1. Approval from State Governments to conduct GM crop field trials:

In order to take the views of the State Government on board and to promote their involvement in activities pertaining to GM crop field trials specially its effective monitoring, it was decided that in respect of all GM crop field trials, the GEAC/RCGM would issue the approval letter only on receipt of NOC from the respective State Government.

2. Conflict of Interest:

The GEAC in its 105th GEAC meeting held on 8.12.2010, had adopted the following criteria to address issues related to conflict of interest based on the recommendations of the sub-committee constituted by the GEAC:

- I. A member of the GEAC is either a team leader or member of a team that has developed a transgenic plant which has come up for consideration before the GEAC shall not participate in the discussion regarding such an application.
- II. A member of the GEAC is a consultant for an industry/research foundation that has developed a transgenic plant which has come up for consideration before the GEAC shall not participate in the discussion regarding the said application.
- III. A Member of the GEAC is involved in the development of transgenic plant constituting the same crop/trait of interest that is being considered by the GEAC or is involved in the development of a recombinant vaccine/drug against the same disease. The GEAC member shall not participate in the discussion regarding such an application.
- IV. Further, in all the three situations mentioned above, the GEAC member should not be involved in the conduct or monitoring of field trials/clinical trials with regard to an application being considered by the GEAC.

The criteria for 'Declaration and Statement of Independence' to be submitted to the GEAC were specific to the involvement of the Member with respect to an application under consideration of the GEAC.

The matter was reconsidered in the GEAC meeting in light of a recent report. The GEAC has now decided that the 'Conflict of Interest' clause would be triggered if the member or his/her spouse or children are involved in terms of the criteria mandated above.

The GEAC has also decided to constitute a Sub-Committee to ensure that there is no Conflict of Interest and suggest further measures for avoiding such situations.

3. Appeal from M/s Mahyco against GEAC decision dated 9.3.2011 regarding the use of non-Bt RRF Cotton Hybrids containing cp4epsps gene (event Mon 88913) as Refugia during BRL-II trials:

The GEAC in its 108th meeting held on 9.3.2011 had taken a decision that the data generated during BRL-II trials using non-Bt RRF flex as refuge shall not be considered for regulatory purpose. The appeal from M/s Mahyco to reconsider the above decision was discussed in the GEAC meeting on 6.7.2011. The Committee rejected the appeal. The applicant will be required to conduct fresh trials with protocols approved by the GEAC.

4. Violations of biosafety norms at GM corn experimental seed production site by Monsanto:

The GEAC in its 104th meeting held on 15. 11.2010 had approved the request for BRL-II trials and experimental seed production.

The representation from some of the interested stakeholders pertaining to non compliance with the biosafety guidelines by M/s Monsanto during experimental seed production of GM corn at Bijapur District, Karnataka was considered by the GEAC .

The GEAC decided to ask the State Government to have the site inspected and send a report urgently. Further action will be taken on getting the report of the State Government.

5. Event selection trials on seven transgenic rice (oryza sativa L) by the Department of Botany, Kolkata University at Rice Research Station, Chinsurah

In the meeting, the issue of approval given to GM rice trials developed by Calcutta University was also discussed. The above matter was discussed in the absence of Dr Swapan Datta. The Committee reconsidered the case and reiterated its earlier decision to allow Calcutta University to conduct event selection trial maintaining an isolation distance of 10 m. In light of the fact that the isolation distance under Indian Minimum Seed Certification Standards (notified under Seed Act 1966) is 3 m for inbred rice lines, the Committee was of the view that the 10 m isolation distance stipulated by the GEAC is adequate.
