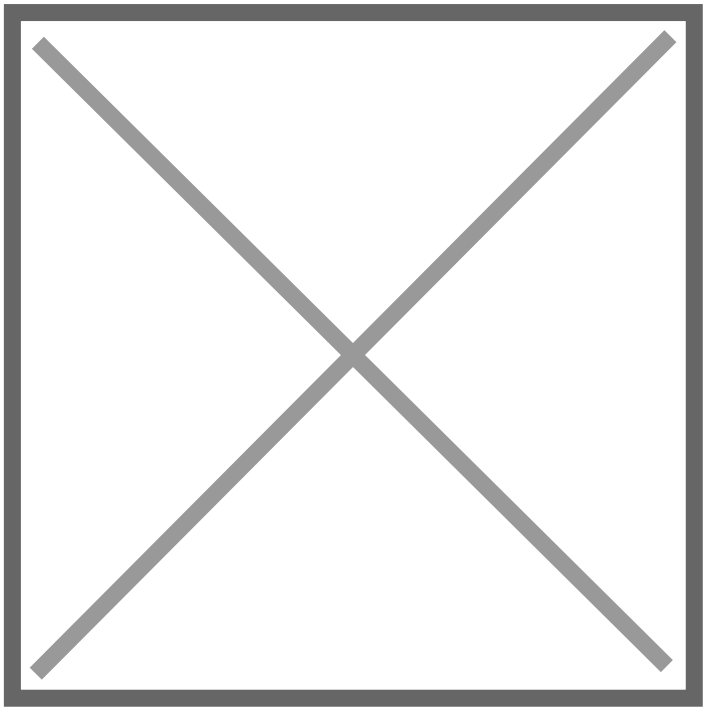


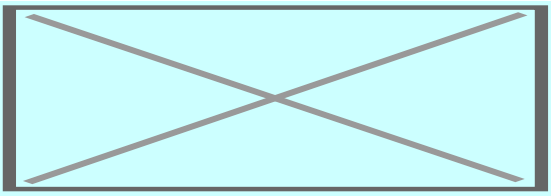

## Panel Discussion 4

11 October 2005 | News



**Panel Discussion 4**

## Leveraging India's bioagri strengths



Dr Sridhar Venkataraman, Dr P S Dravid, Dr KK Narayanan, Paresh Verma and V Ram Kaundinya.

Should the government or industry take the lead to promote transgenic products? Should the groundwork be started for the introduction of GM foods in India? Dr KK Narayanan, managing director, Metahelix moderated this session to find out more that needs to be done for the agri sector. The panelists included Dr PS Dravid, president, JK Agrigenetics, Paresh Verma, head, BioSeed Research India, V Ram Kaundinya, managing director, Emergent Genetics, and Dr Sridhar Venkataraman, group leader, Avesthagen's "Seed for Food" division.

"Both the private and public sector play a major role in their own way for the benefit of the common man. The government should play a key role where heavy investments are required. Besides it should also continue to focus on basic research by prioritizing the needs of the farmers. It should further take up the basic research to pilot scale and finally to farmers with end products.

The government by putting a barrier on sale of Bt seeds is creating an artificial barrier to sell at higher cost. Since the companies are working on similar technology, the government should approve more seeds so that companies can sell their products at an affordable price. Overall the legal system should be reformed as many rules related to environment are violated."

- Dr P S Dravid, president, JK Agrigenetics

"There is need for a proper dialogue between farmers, research organizations, companies and others like NGOs and also educate the farmer on the use of biotechnology. They should be given information on the bio safety issues and on the latest technology coming up in the market. There should be appropriate IP protection for GM crops as still we don't have a strong

implementation mechanism."

- Dr KK Narayanan, managing director, Metahelix

"About 65-70 percent of the total cotton cultivation comprises of spurious Bt seeds. Companies are selling illegal Bt cottonseeds in the open market. Enforcement is the biggest challenge. We have the rights of farmers to sell the seeds. Still the industry has compromised on many issues for political reasons.

The Rs 3,000-crore seed industry is spending about 10-12 percent on R&D activities. It is necessary to have a strong IP regime to protect the newer technologies. Patents should be given for genes and microbes."

- Paresh Verma, head, BioSeed Research India

"The working system is in place. But it is a long way to go. There is need for optimizing the time while doing field trials. The process of agri testing should be streamlined. The present system of event-to-event approval in GM crop is challenging for all.

Private companies should need to look at their priorities and should be left free from the government hitches. The real problem is quality of the food crop and the yield."

- V Ram Kaundinya, managing director, Emergent Genetics

"We have to arrive at a consensus by taking the views of all the stakeholders of the industry and also try to convince all the people involved to solve the problem of shortage of food supply. There should be transparency in the whole process. At present the industry doesn't have a clear data on Bt cottonseeds."

- Dr Sridhar, Venkataraman, group leader, Avesthagen

"The choice of selecting the right technology should be given to farmers. The people will learn to use the new technology but it will take time."

- Dr PK Seth, CEO, Lucknow Biotech Park

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