

Nunhems Seeds suspends work on transgenic crops

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The lack of clear government policy on allowing the entry of genetically modified food items in the country is making companies do a rethink. India's third largest seed supplier, Nunhems Seeds Pvt Ltd, a fully owned subsidiary of the Dutch conglomerate, Nunaza, has suspended its research work on transgenic vegetable crops in the country.

"The rate of recovery of investments in transgenic vegetable seeds is low because there are not many niche segments. Due to the uncertainty over the regulatory policies, it was not feasible to continue the investments in the development of transgenic vegetable seeds," said Dr Arvind Kapur, MD, Nunhems Seeds.

However, we are continuing our work on transgenic cereals, he added. The company has been working on transgenic mustard seeds since 1994 in India. The Indian unit of Nunhems was incorporated in 1995 with Hyderabad as headquarters. While the corporate office is in Gurgaon, Haryana, the company has its research center in Bangalore and a production unit in Andhra Pradesh. Sunseeds is the US counterpart of Nunhems.

Dr Kapur said the government was not clear about labeling of food items and the whole process is in a transitory phase. Because of this it was difficult to have control over project costs. Nunhems develops varieties, which create value by insect and disease resistances and interior and exterior qualities such as taste, color, long shelf and field life. Through its specialized brand name HILD, Nunhems devotes considerable attention to bioseeds. Nunhems principal products are tomato, melon, leek, asparagus, cucumbers, salads, chicory witloof, processing crops and watermelon.