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GM is not the final solution: Dr Brahmachari

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"The CSIR is looking forward to lot many activities in the year 2013. In the 12th plan (2012-17), about Rs 800 crore has been earmarked for only catering to generic activities. Apart from that close to Rs 4,000 crore has been allocated for the research. The Institute of fourth paradigm, bioinformatics data centre is also being established. Apart from that we are starting an institute of synthetic biology at Ghaziabad in national capital region (NCR)." This was stated by Dr Samir K Brahmachari, director general CSIR while speaking to BioSpectrum recently.

However, Dr Brahmachari doesn't seem to be convinced about the use of genetically modified plants on priority basis.. He says, "Why are we only harping on GM. Infact, there are many areas where the matrix associates selection (MAS) technique has to be utilized in the future. The GM focus must be only on relevant crops if necessary. Our top priority has to protect biodiversity and hence focus on documentation of all the species must be the priority."

Speaking further on the issue, he added, "I was looking at Rajma. How many varieties of Rajma we have in India? There is a possibilities that we may find the drought resistant varieties in the remote areas. So we need to do lot more activity on understanding and documenting biodiversity. One has to know that I cannot carry out monoculture in Chattisgarh that might be popular in America or else forestry will die. Some people think nature is stupid and try to play around. Is it possible to screen intelligent people at embryo level and take them only and discard others? Then we will have only people of our liking! But where will it lead us to? I think its better we concentrate on right kind of activities rather than making GM a priority."

On being asked about his talk on pharmacogenomics recently at National Institute of Immunology, New Delhi, Dr Brahmachari mentioned, "The repositioning of the same drug is also that we are looking at. There is a lot of opportunity and we can do a lot in cancer drugs. We should be able to use pharmacogenomics in identifying the drug combinations. The best thing is that these will have least side effects possible with highest therapeutic value."