

Worst fears came true says ABLE-AG citing IB report

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As per ABLE-AG, "The IB report appropriately and comprehensively exposes how few NGOs are active against the economic, social, developmental interests of India." The Association also lauded the subsequent action by Ministry of Home Affairs of the government of India, to put on hold foreign funding of some NGOs as these funds are reportedly being used for surreptitious motives.

The report, said ABLE-AG, further highlights how these NGOs have diligently worked towards derailing the diffusion of progressive crop biotechnology in India, which has seen benefits with millions of farmers across the globe.

"Our crop yields and animal productivity are one of the lowest globally. Blending modern tools of biotechnology with conventional breeding is essential to produce the required food, fodder, fiber and fuel per unit land area. Technology introduction of genetic modification in crops should be evaluated in the context of crops and traits in which traditional methods have reduced crop improvements or would take too long to develop. Biotech applications in agriculture may be used not in isolation but as a part of the package of solutions to address economic and social needs of a growing population," said Mr Ram Kaundinya, chairman, ABLE-AG.

"It is a pity that just when the country was about to take further steps in deploying biotechnology in more crops, the unfortunate moratorium on Bt Brinjal was imposed in 2010, under pressure from the same NGOs," he added.

As a result, R&D activities in GM crops by both public and private sectors were put on hold since 2010, causing enormous delay in making these technologies available to farmers. There are over 50 applications for initiating biotech research and field trials of various biotech enabled crops pending with the GEAC. At stake is over Rs 8,000 crore, invested in research in the sector by public sector institutions over the past five years. The private sector which is being increasingly maligned is investing about Rs 2,700 crore a year into research. This research is being conducted by Indian researchers, in India, for the

Indian farmer.

"We urge the Narendra Modi government to ensure that the process of research including open-field trials under the supervision of existing regulatory bodies is not get halted. Field trials are part of research to ensure that the data generated helps scientifically evaluate bio-safety, food safety and the efficacy of the genetically modified seeds, and any attempt to discourage such tests conducted under strict supervision of the regulators is a retrograde step," Mr Kaundinya added.

ABLE-AG strongly advocates adoption of biotechnology for the benefit of farmers and food security of the country. The government needs to take all possible measures for fearless promotion of suitable technologies that will help the nation develop in different spheres of economy. Many traits like Water Use Efficiency, Salt Tolerance and Nitrogen Use Efficiency in addition to Insect Resistance and Herbicide Tolerance are waiting to be deregulated so that the country can derisk the lives of millions of farmers.

India's population is expected to reach 1.5 billion by 2025 and additional food is needed. Crop improvement, solely by conventional methods to enhance food production by 2050 would be inadequate. Crop losses due to climatic conditions, pests, diseases and declining soil fertility, should be additionally factored in.

ABLE-AG strongly refutes the allegations of the four NGOs that the corporates influenced the IB report and dismisses them with utmost contempt that they deserve. This kind of malicious propaganda is aimed at tarnishing the image of premier Institutions like the IB.