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In his exclusive conversation with the BioSpectrum, he elaborated on how his campaign seeks to address the problem related to the high incidence of Vitamin A deficiency in India.

Q: Why do we need Gloden rice? Why are international health agencies of repute not openly recommending it?

Golden Rice is a new type of rice that contains beta carotene, a source of vitamin A, thus a potential new food-based approach to the issue. However, opposition from Greenpeace and NGOs has led to political pressure on respective governments in developing nations leading to reluctance to give a go ahead for its cultivation. The latest examples among these is China.

The UN agencies by not declaring their position on the Golden Rice, sound more about being politically correct. They perhaps fear the activists in Europe and don't want to take a position due to fear of offending them. But it is not good as we have a problem here. They know it the international charity and health organizations that are supporting the cause of providing nutrition to children of developing countries. They must stand up for what is right.

Q: How will be the golden rice priced? Why do we require it instead of capsules to deliver vitamin A?

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Golden rice will be available at the same cost at which white rice is. As to your question why vitamin A capsules wouldn't suffice the purpose, the answer is that the capsule costs $1 each to deliver. That would cost $250 million to deliver these to 250 million children who suffer from deficiency, which is not economically viable.

UNICEF is doing a great job in making vitamin A capsules available but it is still not sustainable forever. There is enough food in the world and people are not dying because of starvation but due to need of micro-nutrients. Bio fortification is a wonderful process where plants are making the vitamins by themselves using sunlight. The scientists at International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) are developing plants with zinc and vitamins.

Q: What are the risks if any? Critics say there could be long term side effects?

Calling it Frankenstein food or monster foods is classic case of propaganda. Can they predict that something will happen? To say that it will happen in future without logic is not acceptable. It is ironic that they say there can be side effects as it is not a medicine against nature. We are only giving a vitamin and what is wrong with it? Can't blame Media as it didn't had enough voices to provide them other side of the story. They don't want to believe companies as they feel it is serving their interest. That is why the independent environmentalists like me are campaigning for it.

Q: Why did you undergo change of heart and leave Greenpeace to support GM crops?

My book, "Confessions of a Greenpeace dropout: The making of a sensible environmentalist' gives a detailed overview on the reasons why I chose to leave the organization. I was a driving force shaping policy and direction for 15 years while Greenpeace became the world's largest environmental activist organization. We began with strong humanitarian orientation at Greenpeace against nuclear war. So we really cared for people as it was the issue of civilization. However, as the organization evolved, it went away from peace part and focussed only on green. And by the time I left, human beings were called the enemies of nature. We are all part of nature and to tell children that we are against it was infact against the basic ecological law. Other aspects in short are that the campaigns run by Greenpeace which were misguided and based on misinformation. I realized it when saw that the information fed to masses was factually incorrect.

My fellow directors who didn't had any formal education in science like I did. They didn't like the way I argued my environmental position on the basis of logic and scientific reasoning. Policies come on the basis of knowledge and logic. But it is disappointing that the sensationalism and misinformation became a policy there.

It is a testament to the uncaring attitude of Greenpeace and other NGOs that they will not drop their opposition to Golden Rice. Golden Rice has been proven to deliver vitamin A to both adults and children so there is certainty that it could save millions of lives. Can you imagine the grief of millions of poor parents who watch helplessly while their young children perish before their eyes? Fear and guilt makes a good foundation for campaign and this is how Greenpeace survives even today on emotionalism. I feel it is wrong.

Q: What are you actually doing to help the cultivation of Golden Rice?

Our job is not to grow the rice but spread awareness. We trying to increase public awareness about the subject and make them understand that how important Golden rice could be against the disease in children. Hellen Keller is the main organization for blind in the world and they support us. Those who oppose it have no right to do.

Had it been a cure for a disease like Malaria, Cancer, or Ebola, it would have been approved years ago. "It is time the international community intervened in this humanitarian tragedy. Our tour to promote the positive message of Golden Rice has been met with heavy resistance from anti-capitalist activists, 20 of which have joined forces to oppose our Indian leg of our tour.

Q: What are the reasons behind mistrust between farmers and big companies? Given the current scenario, how hopeful are you on its cultivation?

The mistrust has been created due to the negative fear mongering. Left is using this as a front. It has nothing to do with the science behind it. They want to reinvent themselves by riding on this issue of farmers. The people who destroy grown crops cannot be real farmers. The farmers don't destroy crops, they grow them. The leftist activists want all the institutions to be state owned but we all know that it doesn't work that way. There are examples to prove that.We are saying that it is a cure. I am very hopeful that one day it will see the light.

Biotech industry is not a huge one in India but they have been stifled due to the ridiculous opposition. When it should be an issue of health, it is sad that this has been reduced to being a political game. It is a fact that 1.4 million life years are lost within a span of 10 years in India due to vitamin deficiencies. Shouldn't that be addressed?