

BRAI Bill: needed or not needed?

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The BRAI bill has lapsed. What are the industry's reactions?

Ms Kiran Mazumdar Shaw, CMD, Biocon: "The Biotechnology Regulatory Authority of India (BRAI) Bill has been stuck in limbo for years. Time and again our political leaders have failed to show the political will needed to take up this crucial piece of legislation for an informed debate in Parliament. Though the BRAI Bill was prepared after wide-ranging consultations among all stakeholders including the public, we have allowed strident activism and misleading campaigns to stall the passage of this bill. The result is that it will stifle the efforts of both private Indian companies as well as public sector institutions to come up with much-needed solutions using biotechnology."

ABLE: The introduction of BRAI bill is long-overdue since the submission of Swaminathan Committee report on biotechnology regulations; unfortunately the BRAI bill lapsed with the end of tenure of last Lok Sabha. Industry hopes that the bill will be revived and tabled again before the Parliament soon especially since the Rajya Sabha Secretariat has done great work in conducting a significant consultation process and compiling and reviewing all the comments received from various stakeholders.

Dr B V Ravi Kumar, MD, xCyon Diagnostics: This is extremely sad. Biotech requires a special attention as it is highly technical area at the same time very important for the general public and required an agency with domain knowledge to regulate. Agri Industry must be very upset.

Are you satisfied with the draft of the bill placed in Parliament?

ABLE: We believe that on a broad level the bill is a step in the right direction. We support a science-based, efficient, transparent, predictable and time-bound regulatory system that promotes scientific research and development of beneficial technology while providing adequate protection of the environment, human and animal health. However, like any another bill, this too needs some discussion. Various stakeholders, including us, have given submissions on the bill draft and have suggested some changes. We hope the government will look into these submissions, and parliamentarians will take note of our views and suggestions while passing the same.

Dr Swapan Kumar Datta, deputy director general (Crop Science): Division of Crop Science, ICAR: The draft bill submitted in Parliament is a reasonably good one and I am satisfied with that. However, there is always room for improvement and we could have gained some thoughtful feedback from the Parliamentarians during the debate of the bill.