

I am not against Bt Brinjal: Jairam Ramesh

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New Delhi, Aug 19, 2010: Seeking to dispel the notion that he is anti-(Genetically Modified) GM or anti-bt brinjal, Mr Jairam Ramesh, Minister for Environment and Forests, has said that he has been an advocate of GM crops from the very beginning, and assured the agribiotech industry about every possible help from the government.

In his inaugural address at the launch of the Agriculture Group (ABLE-AG) by the Association of Biotechnology Led Enterprises (ABLE) at New Delhi on Aug 18, 2010, Mr Ramesh opined that though GM crops are an important part of future development of the agribiotech sector, it should not be seen as the only route to all food security needs, and stressed on public investments in the agriculture sector.

The Minister while making his point said, "there is a need to have a strong and vibrant public society for research in agribiotechnology sector. The research must be problem driven and we should first take up those crops that can directly address the food security issues before us."

Prof Yoginder K Alagh, economist and former Union Minister, in his keynote address, spoke about the demand for cereals rising at a faster rate. He said, " We have gone wrong in our assessment of the technology-related policies in agriculture. We lack a policy on the product outcome from the forests. We need to have a rule-based system, which is better than cost-based system. Price control strategy should be replaced by the open market strategy.

Welcoming the participants, Mr Ram Kaundinya, CEO, Advanta Seeds, Hyderabad, and Chairman, ABLE-AG, said that there is a need to increase productivity in the agriculture sector. For that, he said, " The genetic potential of seeds need to be targeted for better yield by the private industry."

Lauding the assurances given by the Minister, Mr Kaundinya said, " This is really a positive step, and we hope that the agribiotech sector would be fully supported by the govt. We must also have a policy on research and development in the country, so that we can move swiftly towards achieving our goals."

Dr KK Narayanan, managing director, Metahelix, Bangalore, and executive council member, ABLEAG, in his concluding remarks, welcomed the assurance given by the Minister to agribiotech sector, and hoped that it would pull out the sector from stagnation.

A large number of renowned agribiotech scientists from both private as well as government, participated in the event. The focus of ABLE-AG (Agriculture Group) is to offer benefits of modern technology to Indian farmers and consumers. Besides that, the group has goals such as advocating fair and equitable policy advocacy, promotion of public-private partnerships, innovation and technology dissemination and creating public awareness about modern biotechnology.