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Repeat testing of GM crops must stop : ABLE AG

08 Apr 2013, Rahul Koul, Biospecindia



"Our immediate concern is to get permission for states to conduct GM crop research trials. That includes No Objection Certificates (NOCs) for biosafety level 1 and 2 trials as already approved by Genetic Engineering Appraisal committee (GEAC) in the past, and those likely to be permitted based on last month's GEAC meeting, the minutes of which are being eagerly awaited. In this connection, we have already started contacting state governments all over again. Thus, one of the major concerns of the industry is to seek permission for testing GM crop cultivars without losing much time: already two precious years have been lost, which translates into enormous cost to the industry, and a much larger opportunity cost to the country," stated Dr N Seetharama, executive director of Association of Biotechnology led Enterprises-Agriculture Group (ABLE-AG), who spoke to BioSpectrum over telephone on April 6, 2013.

ABLE-AG consists of 12 member companies that are considered to be leading technology providers of modern agricultural biotechnology to the country. The industry association been trying to persuade the state governments for not to go for the repeat testing of GM crops slated for trials. Dr Seetharama added further, "We are holding meetings with the principal secretaries of various state governments to make them realize that the laboratory testing by state government is not required when that has already happened once at the central level."

"At present, we all know that the regulatory structure is very complex and we have to bear with the same system for the time being. However, I am equally hopeful that government will put the resolution of the issue on fast track mode. We hope that the pending Biotechnology Regulatory Authority Bill (BRAI) would be soon tabled in the

parliament and the new better regulatory system will replace this existing one," concluded Dr Seetharama.

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