

PM: We should not succumb to prejudice against GM crops

Vishwa Mohan TNN

New Delhi: In a remark which may cheer agriculture scientists and farmers across the country and signal a change in stance, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh on Monday said the government should not succumb to “unscientific prejudices” against genetically modified (GM) crops.

Responding to anti-GM activists who have been opposed to even scientific field trials of genetically engineered crops, Singh said his government remained committed “to promoting the use of these new technologies for agricultural development”.

His remark, while delivering the inaugural speech at the 101st Indian Science Congress (ISC) in Jammu where he announced a number of R&D projects with an outlay of around Rs 9,000 crore, may bring a sense of relief to scientists who have developed many transgenic seeds over the years but could not go for field trial due to moratorium on such activities. The PM, however, insisted on adhering to the safety aspect of transgenic crops before releasing it for cultivation. “While safety must be ensured, we should not succumb to unscientific prejudices against Bt crops. Our government remains committed to promoting the use of these new technologies for agricultural development,” Singh said.

He, at the same time, urged the scientific community to increase communication and engagement with society in explaining socially productive applications of technology alternatives and for improving the productivity of small and medium enterprises. The statement also showed possible change in the stand of Centre towards GM crops. The ministry of environment and forests has already indicated that the government is not averse to the idea of allowing field trial of transgenic food crops in the country.

200 NGOs protest ‘hasty’ clearances for 70 projects

New Delhi: Backed by villagers and displaced people from different states, members of 200 NGOs from across the country on Monday slammed environment and forests minister M Veerappa Moily for ignoring environment and social concerns while granting speedy clearances to mining and infrastructure projects. TNN



Manmohan Singh