



# Don't believe the anti-GMO campaign

Posted at: 11/12/2018

## **Don't believe the anti-GMO campaign-GM crops reduce pesticide use, increase yields and profits, and pose no health hazards**

- A review article, "Modern technologies for sustainable food and nutrition security", which appeared in the November 25 2018 issue of the peer-reviewed journal Current Science, is deeply worrying.
- The article was authored by geneticist P.C. Kesavan and leading agriculture scientist M.S. Swaminathan and describes Bt cotton as a "failure".
- As the Principal Scientific Adviser to the Government of India, K. VijayRaghavan, rightly said, this paper is "deeply flawed".
- It has the potential to mislead the public and the political system.

### **Rely on scientific evidence**

- While the general public can be easily swayed by unauthenticated reports, the authors, as scientists, should have relied on hardcore scientific evidence before making such adverse comments.
- Abiotic stress in crops is a major hazard and does not fall under the less than 1% category mentioned in the review article.
- Major science academies of the world such as the U.S.'s National Academy of Sciences, the African Academy of Sciences and the Indian National Science Academy have supported GM technology.
- In 2016, 107 Nobel laureates signed a letter challenging Greenpeace to drop its anti-genetically modified organism (GMO) technology stance.
- They stated that the anti-GMO campaign is scientifically baseless and potentially harmful to poor people in the developing world.
- Even reports based on faulty studies in experimental animals that stated that GMOs cause cancer were withdrawn. Major food safety authorities of the world have rejected these findings.

### **Not a failure in India**

- Bt cotton is not a failure in India.

- It is unfortunate that farmer distress is being wrongly attributed to Bt cotton failure.
- GM mustard (DMH-11) is a technology to create mustard hybrids.
- Being a self-pollinator, mustard is difficult to hybridise through conventional methods.
- Genetic modification allows different parents to be combined easily, helping yields go up substantially.
- India has one of the strongest regulatory protocols for field trials of GM crops.
- Many scientists have been part of the monitoring processes, and it is an insult to the integrity of our scientists to indict the Review Committee on Genetic Manipulation and the Genetic Engineering Approval Committee as lacking in expertise and having vested interests.
- A negative review from opinion-makers can only mislead the country.
- In the end, it is India that will be the loser.

The Hindu

