

# The Impending Disaster of Government's Approval to Commercial Production of GM Mustard Crops

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As has been apprehended, the Genetic Engineering Approval Committee (GEAC), which is supposed to be a statutory watch-dog, has discreetly given its approval for the commercial production of genetically modified mustard (Dhara Mustard Hybrid-DMH-11) in our country. There is no doubt that this approval will soon be accepted and confirmed by the environmental Ministry of India.

Neither the bitter and pathetic experience of farmers throughout India with the GM Cotton and the havoc it played after its introduction in 2002, causing the suicides of more than 50,000 farmers, nor the opposition from the eminent scientists and activists against GM crops and GM foods, nor the protests from various farmer's groups throughout India against the introduction of G.M. foods and G.M. food commercial crops in India, could deter the GEAC from taking this ominous decision.

The approval of GM mustard side-lined the four high-level reports advising against the adoption of these crops in India: the 'Jairam Ramesh Report' of February 2010, imposing an indefinite moratorium on Bt Brinjal; the 'Sopory Committee Report' [August 2012]; the 'Parliamentary Standing Committee' [PSC] Report on GM crops [August 2012]; and the 'Technical Expert Committee [TEC] Final Report' [June-July 2013]).

The supposed strong stand of B.J.P in its election manifesto and the showcase protests of Jana Jagaran Manch, an affiliate to RSS- the ideological master of BJP, proved to be mere pretensions to hoodwink the agitating masses against G.M. foods and G.M. crops. The tall claims of B.J.P about 'nationalism', anti-foreign stances proved to be hallow and worthless.

It is clearly proved that the B.J.P government had pitifully bowed down before the power of imperialist commercial corporate lobby which is under the direction of US imperialism, assenting to its demand of commercial introduction of GM Crops and GM foods into our country. This approval for commercial production of GM mustard crops is not going to be limited to GM mustard alone. It opens a thoroughfare for G.M. foods and crops to flood India with their drastic adverse impacts. Immediately they will pave the way for over 100 GM products of various crops including cereals, fruits, vegetables and commercial crops to flood India.

The Modi's government of BJP, with its so-called avowed claims of science-backed development of agriculture to boost farmer's income', has chosen to deceive the farmers of our country, enslaving them to the giant agricultural MNCs, presently to Bayer- a collaborator with Monsanto, which played havoc in India.

But covering this treachery the B.J.P. government and the GEAC have been tirelessly promoting the commercialisation of GM mustard, with lofty and luring arguments to pull the wool over the eyes of the people.

The GEAC argues that the decision of approval for commercial production of GM mustard was unanimous without any dissent. It also argues that the "transgenic mustard in question has been developed by a team of scientists at Delhi university led by former vice-chancellor Deepak Pental under a government-funded indigenous (Swadeshi) project and since DMH-11 has been approved by the Indian Patents Office, there should not be any Question on its origin".

The GEAC claims that the yield of DMH-11 will be 20-30 percent higher than existing varieties and thus the statutory watch dog on GM has virtually transformed into the promoter of GM mustard.

However the claims of GEAC prove to be utterly false and not maintainable.

Just because the said approval was an unanimous decision, it does not mean such a decision was proper and correct and not harmful and ruinous to the agricultural sector of India and to the interests of the people. On the contrary, it is an unanimous decision to ruin the Indian agricultural sector.

Again the argument that since the present GM mustard was developed by the Indian scientists at Delhi university by a team led by Deepak Pantal under a government funded project, it is indigenous and since DMH-11 has been approved by the Indian patents office there should not any case to “its origin” holds no water in the wake of the fact revealed by T.S.R.Subramanyam, former Union Cabinet Secretary who was instrumental in approving Bt.cotton in India in 2002. He categorically disclosed that “It is exactly same thing that happend with (Bt.Cotton) in 2002, when Bayer technology become swadeshi because it engineered with the money to be given by the government of India for research work. Which, in other words, means that when the proagro (Bayer’s) application for GM musterd was rejected by the GEAC, in 2002, Bayer found in Dr.Deepk Pantal a good Trojan horse to continue its basic agenda, by engineering money to be given by the government for this so called research work on GM mustard, duly facititating it into governmental approval.

In fact the basic patents on the G.M.mustered technology are all owned by the Bayer and the genes that went in to Delhi university were the property of Bayer. Thus the claim about the swadeshi content of GM mustered proves to be utterly false.

Even the claim that GM musterd yields more than 20-30% per hectre too is a blatant lie promoted by the GEAC and pro-GM lobby.

As has been the case with Bt.Cotton that in Africa where non-BT Cotton is used productivity is higher and there is no particular correlation between GM crop and productivity. Even in the case of GM musterd, the highest yields in musterd are from the five countries which do not grow GM musterd – U.K, France, Poland, Germany and Czech Republic – and not from GM growing US or Canada according to the data of FAO.

Thus the claims in favour of commercialisation of GM mustard in India prove to be false on all counts. If this GM mustard is approved by the government of India, there will be formidable economic, social and environ-mental ramifications on India with long time adverse devastating effects which cannot be mended or erased easily.

Now this is not a simple question of commercial intro-duction of GM mustard. This is a question of imperialist controlled GM technology and its ruthless loot and ruin of recipient countries of this technology by the multi national corporations.

We have already seen how Monsanto with its false claims caused farmers suicides because of debt due to high costs of seeds since Monsanto is extracting huge amounts in the form of royalties, enhancing the GM Cotton seed prices to the abnormal extent by 80,000 percent. By now Monsanto had extracted Rs.7000 crores as illegal royalties from India. It had intensified its monopoly on cotton seed.

The same devastation too will occur with the introduction of G.M. mustard. It will not be limited to the above mentioned perils. It will increase the chemical herbicide use and Bayer one of the top most global pesticide seller, who along with Monsanto had more control on pesticide sales and commercial seed sales, will enhance its sale of pesticide and pesticide chemicals along with the sale of GM food/crop in India at one stroke with the commercial approval of GM mustard in India.

The imperialist lobby of seeds and pesticide and chemical industry has already made way into India, to loot its agricultural sector through the sale of seeds, pesticides and chemicals via World Trade Organisation in to the field as producers of all varieties of seeds. It has ruined India’s capability of producing sufficient seeds that are diverse, healthy, and safe. India had achieved self sufficiency in edible oil in 1990s through a programme of technical mission adopted by the central government which proved that given the correct prescription of policies India can

achieve self sufficiency in production of edible oils with indigenous technology without any foreign controlled GM seeds.

But the MNCs have dumped palm oil in India by manipulating import duties, prices, trade as well policies of the Indian government and succeeded in importing more than 60% of our domestic requirement of edible oils by 2000. They destroyed our coconut, sesame, groundnut, sunflower, niger, mustard and linseed crops with diverse and healthy food economy to the advantage and profit making of GM-based edible oils. Thus Indian farmers have been losing their control over the locally produced healthy foods.

Now the GM mustard is being forced on us by the commercial lobbies with the connivance of the powers that be.

This is not merely a question of looting and ruining of our economy by the multi-national imperialist corporations. These GM Crops/foods will ruin even the health of the people who consume them.

According to the studies of American Academy Environmental Medicine (AAEM), on animals, they found organ damage, gastro intestinal and immune system disorders, accelerated aging and infertility. Food allergies, disorders such as autism, reproductive disorders are on the rise – the hazardous ramification of GM crops. Hence the AAEM urges doctors to prescribe non GM diets for all patients.

Medical professionals and their scientists have been vehemently condemning H.T (herbicide tolerant) GM crops for increasing herbicide use, leading to serious health conditions – at all stages, but most worryingly at the foetal stage. A scientific report from Argentina found four-fold increase in lists defects and a three-fold increase in childhood cancers in H.T. soya areas. Studies also have shown a strong correlation between growth of G.M. crops, the herbicides they promote and diseases such as acute kidney injury, diabetes, autism, Alzheimer's and cancers for the past 20 years in the U.S.

We in India have already witnessed the horrid and heart-wrenching videos of endosulphan victims of Kasargod district of Kerala – pitifully malformed children and men with bloated body parts. Still our rulers refuse to take lessons in their subservience to the imperialist masters and their commercial corporations!

Another adverse aspect of this G.M. crops is its threat of contamination of non-GM crops besides excessive use of herbicides cascading pollution.

Already we have experienced the consequences of Bt.cotton which ruined cotton crop diversity contaminating other crops. A herbicide tolerant crop promotes constant exposure to a single herbicide – which eventually results in weeds becoming resistant as has been the case in U.S, where 20 species of woods in US are now resistant to Monsanto's Glypho-shate-based herbicide.

World health Organisation has declared glyphosphate to be a "probable human carcinogen". Now the proposed GM mustard is tolerant glufosinate based herbicide.

If such a GM mustard is introduced, every Indian who consume mustard in some form or other also consumes the herbicide residues on it, the millions of poor women, who depend on weeding for their livelihood will be displaced, the bee keeper's honey will be contaminated, yield of the farmers will fall eventually as bees die and India will lose its seed diversity and the international competitive advantage of its non-GM mustard and honey.

Ten years ago, California-based agricultural scientists in a report held insect – resistant Bt.cotton responsible for farmer's suicides in rain-fed areas. Now this GM mustard will be another additional cause to the suicides of farmers of GM mustard crops.

As a matter of fact, out of 20 most developed countries in the world, 17 countries including Japan, Russia, Israel, and most of Europe refuse to grow GM crops. But this fact too could not deter our GEAC, NITI Ayog and the wise B.J.P. rulers from taking their decision of approving GM mustard crop commercially in our country.

In the past we have seen BJP ruled Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan categorically denying any attempt to test GM mustard in their own states. Both of them being main mustard growing states of this country.

But NITI Ayog is arguing in favour of GM mustard. On the other hand Bharatiya Kisan Sangh an affiliate of BJP is arguing that GM H.T mustard has no utility to farmers and was against India's economic interests.

But we cannot rely on the oral and exhibitionist opposition of BJP affiliated organisations like BKS and Jan Jagaran manch or B.M.S and expect any positive results in deterring the B.J.P government from granting its fixed approval of GM mustard.

A broad and steady people's movement has to be developed to fight against the G.M. crop and food introduction in India where already the agricultural sector pushed into acute crisis. It shall be the task of anti-imperialist and anti-fuedal forces of India to build such movement in pursuance of their purposes and aims towards success!.

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