

Governance of Agbiotechnology in India

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Biosafety Regulatory Regime in India

Three-tier structure:

- Review Committee on Genetic Manipulation (RCGM)
- Genetic Engineering Approval Committee (GEAC)
- Monitoring and Evaluation Committee (MEC).

Lacunae in the Regulatory System

- Refusal to engage with public concerns or provide information on trials or test data
- Disregard of the law-
Commercial authorisation of Monsanto's Bt cotton in absence of legally mandated State Level Committees or District Level Committees.

Faulty Implementation

- GM Crops as hybrids vs varieties
- No farmer training in aspects like refuge management, pesticide use
- No evaluation of market or trade prospects
 - soybean, basmati, rice

Deregulation of GE Food...

- Arbitrary deregulation of GE food import
- No reason given, no alternate proposed
- Importing agencies exempted from
 - (a) permission of regulatory bodies.
 - (b) informing government.
 - (c) labeling.

National Biotechnology Development Strategy, 2007

- Heavy focus on industry & private sector
- No mention of food security
- No attempt to strengthen public sector institutions
- No involvement of civil society at any level.
- High Powered Inter-ministerial Coordination Committee provides much needed coordination in government.

Recommendations to amend to the Draft National Biotechnology Regulatory Bill, 2008

Section 6. (3) The Inter - Ministerial Advisory Board and the National Biotechnology Advisory Council will have no authority to intervene on product - specific decisions made by the National Biotechnology Regulatory Authority (NBRA).

Recommendation – The National Biotechnology Regulatory Authority should not be given absolute powers. This clause should be deleted.

Other Recommendations

- *Separate chapters on*
 - *Liability and Redress.*
 - *Disaster Management and recall of products.*
- *Clear provisions for revocation of approval at any juncture, to prevent harm to the environment/public health.*

Other Recommendations...

- *Establish statutory National Bioethics Commission.*
- *Institute consultative and participatory process to prioritize crops and traits*
- *Prohibit commercialization of GM crops for which India is a Centre of Origin (eg. Rice).*

Other Recommendations...

- *Provide for post-market surveillance and monitoring of GM products.*
- *Create provision to deal with bio-terrorism.*
- *Prohibit edible vaccines / GM vaccines in*
- *food crops.*