

GEAC GIVES ITS NOD FOR COMMERCIAL CULTIVATION OF GM MUSTARD YET AGAIN

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Second thought: The panel had first cleared the proposal for commercial cultivation of genetically modified mustard in 2017. PTIS. Irfan

The Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee (GEAC) that functions under the Union Environment Ministry has yet again cleared the proposal for commercial cultivation of genetically modified (GM) mustard. Though the GEAC had cleared the proposal in 2017, the Ministry had vetoed it and suggested the GEAC to hold more studies on the GM crop.

The GEAC had gone through the details submitted by the applicant, Centre for Genetic Manipulation of Crop Plants (CGMCP), and gave necessary approvals for the cultivation of GM mustard. This will be the second GM crop after GM cotton that can be commercially cultivated in the country now.

A GEAC meeting held on October 18 allowed the environmental release of two varieties of genetically engineered mustard, so that it can be used for developing new parental lines and hybrids under the supervision of the Indian Council of Agriculture Research (ICAR). "The environmental release of mustard hybrid Dhara Mustard Hybrid (DMH-11) for its seed production and testing as per existing ICAR guidelines and other extant rules/regulations prior to commercial release," the minutes of the meeting said.

Considering the application of the CGMCP, the GEAC also set certain conditions for the clearance. It includes that the approval is for a limited period of four years and is renewable for two years at a time based on compliance report. External experts will visit the growing sites of the crop at least once during each season.

The applicant should also develop and deposit the DNA fingerprints of the approved varieties to the ICAR.

Activists questioned the decision of the GEAC. Kavitha Kuruganti of the Coalition for a GM-Free India warned the Centre against any such approval. She reminded Union Environment Minister Bhupender Yadav that he himself had written against GM crops earlier.

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