



अखिल भारतीय शेतकरी-शेतमजूर सभा

(संलग्न : हिंद मजदूर सभा)

बाळ दंडवते स्मृति, ना. म. जोशी मार्ग, मुंबई - ४०० ०१३. दूरध्वनी : ०२२-२३०८०२८१

To Whom It May Concern:
Supreme Court of India.
In the case of Aruna Rodrigues Vs. Union of India
(Writ Petition (Civil) No. 260 of 2005)

Sub: Response from farmers' representatives: TEC's interim report vindicates farmers' concerns

All India Shetkari Shet Mazdoor Sabha (AISSMS) an organization of farmers and farm workers organized a 4 day workshop 'On Challenges before Farmers' at the Dr Rammanohar Lohia Samajwadi Vidyapeet, Talegaon Pune, last week from 28th to 31st October 2012 with the support of several unions affiliated to the the Hind Mazdoor Sabha, the oldest and largest central trade union federation of the country which is an independent and democratic trade union centre not affiliated to any political party.

The Parliamentary Standing Committee Report on GM Crops, the interim report of the Technical Expert Committee appointed by the Hon'ble Supreme Court in the aforementioned case, ill effects of first green revolution etc was discussed thread bare in the workshop.

The inaugural session was chaired by Sri Sharad Rao, National President of the HMS. Shri P B Shitole pioneer in the field of Organic Farming and Vice Chairman of the Maharashtra Organic Farmers Federation (MOFF) Advisory Board delivered the Key Note Address and Smt Putul Kumari Member of Parliament inaugurated the Workshop by lighting the lamp. Several scientists, farmers who do ecological farming and seed savers who have extra-ordinary accomplishments to their credit using zero external inputs explained the dangers and futility of GM Crops. They also explained how agriculture could be made profitable by adopting indigenous techniques which would eventually stop migration of youth from rural areas to cities.

Farmers organizations and their representatives from 11 states actively participated in the deliberations. They expressed relief and happiness as they felt vindicated that their oft repeated concerns were reflected in the report of the TEC which recommended a 10 year moratorium on field trials. They expressed the hope that the Court would now pass appropriate orders after accepting the interim report of the TEC recommendations in toto.

One of the primary concerns of the AISSMS is about the **capability** of our regulatory system to monitor and contain the organisms being **inadequate**, thus leading to possible contamination. The issue of environmental release of Genetically Modified Organisms is one that needs the highest level of precaution, and the TEC report has rightly raised it.

Further, with the most critical input in agriculture being the **Seed** which is slowly becoming the **monopoly** of the multinational companies, there is an added risk from this technology to our



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farmers and their livelihoods. On the technical front, contamination jeopardizes native diversity in addition to posing trade security threats.

Farmers expressed concern about the the possible disastrous consequences of field trials of GM crops. They expressed satisfaction that the TEC's interim report submitted to the Supreme Court recommending a 10 year moratorium on field trials of Bt. Transgenics in all food crops is based on the current overall status of food safety evaluation of Bt Transengenics. It is also in accordance with the precautionary principle and needs to be supported. The concern of GM food contaminating non - GM food is another factor which is why it is all the more necessary to ban field trials. The contamination level will be high in a country like ours where the land holding is small and there is lack of control in harvesting, storage and transport. Organic farmers whose products need to be certified as being free of chemicals/pesticides and non-GMO would be particularly strongly affected.

Our representatives who have met hundreds of widows of the farmers who have committed suicide are of the opinion that farmers especially in vidharba have committed suicide due to crop failure. This was because the policy makers the bureaucrats and the technocracy in collusion with the multinational seed companies have been misguiding and luring the farmers to use Bt cotton seeds. The TEC points out that there is no mechanism for the payment of compensation to the farmers whose product could be affected and that there was no statutory method in place to address these issues vindicates our concern. Moreover any technology, especially in the farming sector should not be the monopoly of one company, as in Bt cotton. The benefits that were assured from Bt cotton cultivation are not coming because new pests have appeared. Our experience shows that input cost have increased and profit margins reduced as farmers have to use more pesticide and chemical fertilizers, which have led them to indebtedness and suicides. Regulators have also not taken into consideration the possibility of economic loss caused due to contamination.

There are number of issues that is contrary to the basic safety requirements such as the policy of delegating responsibility by leaving the choice of selection of site for field trials to the applicant and allowing the work to be sub contracted which would lead to violation of the conditions of safety. The existing requirement of toxicity tests before the commencement of field trials is not adequate.

The haste with which the govt has gone ahead with promoting and allowing research as well as open releases, exhibits lack of transparency, rigour and precaution. We reiterate our support to the recommendations contained in the TEC's intrim report and urge the Hon'ble Supreme Court to pass orders on the basis of the recommendations of the TEC.

Sincerely,


Aneel Hegde
General Secretary