



ANDHRA PRADESH RYOTU SANGHAM

210-Amrutha Estates, Himayathnagar, Hyderabad - 29.

Pasya Padma

President
94909 52276

K. Rama Krishna, Ex. MLA

Working President
94400 45688

Ravula Venkaiah

General Secretary
94909 52231

Date: 5 November, 2012

To:
The Hon'ble Justices,
Supreme Court of India.
New Delhi

Respected Justices of the Supreme Court,

Ref: Case of Aruna Rodrigues Vs. Union of India (Writ Petition No. 260 of 2005)
Sub: Report of Technical Expert Committee on GM field trials

Andhra Pradesh Ryotu Sangham is a statewide membership-based farmers' union affiliated to All India Kisan Sabha with more than 5 lakh members throughout Andhra Pradesh. We campaign for various issues related to farmers' livelihoods, rights and welfare.

We have been engaged in the issue of Genetically Modified crops for more than 10 years, trying to protect the interests of farmers from domination by large companies, and the environment of their farms from damage. There are many serious concerns voiced by our farmer members regarding GM crops, and we have organized many struggles on Bt cotton and strongly voiced our opinion during the Bt brinjal public hearings.

We are glad to note that the Technical Expert Committee appointed by the Supreme Court has submitted its interim report on the issue of field trials of Genetically Modified crops in India. AP Ryotu Sangham welcomes the report of the Technical Expert Committee (TEC) of the Supreme Court recommending moratorium on field trials of GM crops.

We would like to express our views as a large mass organization of farmers for your attention and urge the Hon'ble Court to accept the committee's recommendations. Andhra Pradesh is one of the big seed producing states and also has extensive experience with Bt cotton. There are a lot of risks in introducing GM crops into field trials, because there is a strong possibility of contamination and illegal spread of the seeds and crops. In A.P., we already have experience that GM bhindi and GM rice trials happened without permission, and there was no track of the GM crop which was produced and sold in regular market (which is obviously illegal since there is no GEAC approval for commercialization). Some seed production trials of GM cotton and maize have happened in Andhra Pradesh but there was no proper accounting of how much seed was produced and whether all of it was transferred for research purpose – reports indicate that this seed was illegally sold to farmers in the market.

We are very concerned about the health and environmental impact of the GM crops, especially food crops. AP Ryotu Sangham fully supports the stand that field trials should not be permitted until biosafety is clearly established and the appropriate regulatory system is put in place. During the Bt brinjal debate, it was very clear that our regulatory and testing system is highly inadequate. Since that time, there have been no steps to make the system stronger – still the biosafety tests on rats cover only 30 or 90 days instead of entire life-cycle and multiple generations, and still the testing is done by companies themselves instead of independent testing. Therefore without strengthening this system and proving biosafety, no field trials should be permitted.

Due to all these reasons, in Andhra Pradesh, farmer unions affiliated to all major parties, as well as independent farmer organizations, have met the Agriculture in a common delegation and demanded the stoppage of field trials. Especially, we requested that in crops like rice which have originated in India, we should not permit any GM research.

In the interests of the farming community, and protection of health and environment, we fully support the recommendations of the Technical Expert Committee, which is comprised of highly experienced scientists. We also support the unanimous recommendations of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on GM food crops.

We reject the propaganda of the GM industry lobby organizations, and some farmer outfits promoted by the GM industry, that the recommendations are against farmers' interests. We request the Supreme Court, the Government of India, the media and the public not to be misled by such false propaganda by vested interests.

Yours sincerely,

Pasya Padma .

Pasya Padma
President