



Adv. V. S. SUNIL KUMAR
MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE

Thiruvananthapuram

Date 28-9-16

Dear *Radha Mohan Sridhiji*

I would like to draw your kind attention to the fact that the Genetic Engineering Approval Committee under the Environmental Ministry is making a move to permit the Commercial cultivation of the Genetically Modified Mustard. The "Genetically Modified Mustard" is a controversial hybrid of mustard that is being proposed to be introduced into the Indian Farms.

The decision comes at a time when the Bt Cotton, the only GM crop allowed in India, has failed in such a short time, and that too at the expense of the farmers. It is sad that they are being forced to carry the burden of the failure of this GM technology. Consequently millions of farmers have got into debt due to the failure of the crop and many of them has even chosen to take their own lives.

In the case of Brinjal, the GM technology was rejected by all the sections of the society including the farming community in India and the Government had to place a moratorium on the project. As in the case of Brinjal, India happens to be a Centre of Diversity for Mustard as well.

The GM Hybrid Mustard is being promoted as a higher productive crop, and a solution to the growing oil import crisis in India. But it has clearly come to our notice that this GM Hybrid Mustard is actually less productive than at least 5 different varieties/ hybrids already in the market. Moreover, this technology which uses three different genes inserted unnaturally into the plant is potentially harmful and has serious biosafety concerns. This is a very important trade and health concern. We feel that such a technology is totally unnecessary in India, and should not be deployed at such a risk to Indian farms.

We also remind you that during the 1990s, the "Technology Mission on Oil Seeds" a Government of India initiative, had made our nation almost fully self-

sufficient in oil seeds and improved the prospects of our farmers. This effort was reversed in less than a decade due to the wrong import policies. This is a classical example of how our trade policies affect our own agricultural production and the livelihood security of the farmers. Kerala has opposed such moves of the Government of India including the Indo-AEAN FTA and RCEP. Today our self reliance in edible oil production has been destroyed. During the last year (2014-15) the overall import of edible oil into the country had gone up to 127 lakh MT. The hazardous technology used in GM Mustard can even wipe out all the indigenous varieties of our country and hence this can not be a solution to our growing food security issues.

We also wish to use this opportunity to inform you that globally, Indian agriculture has a strong brand value due to its "Non GMO" status. When many developed countries like US, Canada are reeling under the impact of import rejections due to GMO contamination, India has a high value "Organic" brand, and with very impressive growth rates. Kerala is a State that has a strong organic farming policy, and is moving towards becoming a fully organic state. The present LDF Government has taken this as a mission to be accomplished in its term. We wish to retain and protect the "Organic" advantage. GM Mustard will destroy the basic objectives of organic policy as well as trade advantage and will impair the country's shift towards organic farming. Being a consumer state, we are also dependent on mustard from the mustard growing states, and we wish to place our strong concern on behalf of our consumers. It must be noted that GM Mustard is a negative value crop, while Organic Mustard will have huge value appreciation. This is advantageous for our farmer, trader and consumer. No sensible nation will destroy this advantage.

It is also well understood that the present GM Mustard like any other GM Crop, will have serious health and environmental impacts. The herbicide tolerance (HT) technology used in developing GM Mustard will have far reaching implications. Farmers are already reeling under increasing weed problem and use of hazardous herbicides, and this crop would force us to use more and more

herbicides to combat "super weeds", as is happening in nations like US. Moreover the GM technology will wipe out the large indigenous seed wealth of our country.

The issue was discussed in our Ministerial Council and we have taken strong objections to the approval of GM Mustard. I wish to inform the decision of the Kerala Government to oppose the introduction of GM Mustard. We request you to direct the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change to abstain from giving approval for the cultivation of GM Mustard.

We have learnt that several State governments in India, including the mustard growing states, are opposed to the introduction of GM Crops in their state. During the Bt Brinjal debate in 2009-2010, Kerala government, along with several other state governments had expressed our strong views against the approval of commercial cultivation of Bt Brinjal in India. We wish to reiterate the same. It is our request that agriculture being a state subject as well, the Union Government may consult the States on matters regarding the promotion of such dangerous technologies that affect the farm, farmer, food, biodiversity, environment & trade

Hence it is requested that action may be taken by your Ministry for ban on the cultivation and use of GM crops, including the Mustard in the larger interest of our nation.

Yours Sincerely

With Best regards

Adv.V.S.Sunil Kumar

To

Sri. Radha Mohan Singh,
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