

Brief on 117th Minutes of GEAC Meeting held on 23.3.2013

1. The Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee (GEAC) is a statutory Committee constituted under the Rules for manufacture, Use, Import, Export and Storage of Hazardous Microorganisms/Genetically Engineered Organisms or Cells 1989 (Rules 1989), notified under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986. The tenure of the GEAC is for 3 years. The term of the last GEAC had expired on 30.4.2012 and reconstituted on 11.3.2013.

2. Pursuant to the reconstitution, one meeting of the GEAC was held on 22.3.2013. Minutes of the 117th GEAC meeting held on 22.3.2013 was kept in abeyance.

3. The GEAC considered in its 117th meeting held on 22.3.2013 three main issues:

1. Extending the tenure of the Standing Committee constituted by the GEAC to approve cases of Bt cotton hybrids expressing approved events. So far five events of Bt cotton developed by are under commercial cultivation. The Standing Committee is serviced by Department of Biotechnology.
2. The TOR of the Standing Committee has been expanded to streamline the event based approval mechanism with a view to weed out non-performing Bt Cotton hybrids.
3. 3 cases of GM crop field trials for reconsideration where additional information was sought by experts in the earlier meetings.
4. 22 case for revalidation of GEAC clearance for getting NOC from the State Government / Change in location of trials.
5. Out of the 25 cases (3 reconsideration and 22 revalidation), the GEAC approved 24 cases. In remaining one case additional information was sought.

4. All GM crops field trials are subject to stringent norms as international norms which include the following:

- i. Maintaining a crop specific isolation distance from the periphery of the experimental site to other sexually compatible fields as prescribed under the Indian Minimum Seed Certification Standards.
- ii. Biological barrier by planting border rows all around the experimental plot. The width of the border row would vary on a case to case basis.

- iii. Maintaining a physical barrier around the experimental plot to keep away unauthorized persons.
- iv. Submission of a validated event specific test protocol of 0.01% before undertaking the trials.
- v. Designating a lead scientist who would be responsible for conducting the trial.
- vi. Crop specific post-harvest restrictions include (a) burning of the border rows and left over plants and plant parts from the entire experimental plot; (b) the trials sites should not be used for planting the same plant species and (c) the site should be monitored for volunteers and rendered non-viable before flowering.

5 Currently there are about 60 cases pending consideration of GEAC for field trials. In addition to the above, 9 Cases of recombinant Pharma are also pending consideration of GEAC.

6 The GEAC meeting scheduled for March 21, 2014 will consider reconsideration / revalidation cases of GM crop field trials and new cases of recombinant Pharma and 3 cases for import of GM Soybean Oil which are also reconsideration cases as GEAC had sought additional information in one of the earlier meeting

7. The Hon'ble Supreme Court has not imposed any ban or restrictions on GM crops field trials as on date.

8. The Minutes of the GEAC meeting and decisions taken therein are as per the "Rules for the Manufacture, Use/Import/Export and Storage of Hazardous Micro Organisms/ Genetically Engineered Organisms or Cells" notified under EPA, 1986 and guidelines prescribed for confined field trials of GE crops.
