

## **Decisions of the 128<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee (GEAC) held on 04.03.2016**

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The 128<sup>th</sup> meeting of the GEAC was held on 4<sup>th</sup> March, 2016 in the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC) at Narmada Conference Hall, Jal Block from 11:00 am under the Chairmanship of Shri Hem Pande, Special Secretary, MoEF&CC.

At the outset, the Chairman welcomed all the Members of the GEAC and requested Ms. Madhumita Biswas, Director and Member Secretary, GEAC to initiate discussion on the agenda items.

### **Agenda item No. 1: Leave of absence**

The Committee granted leave of absence to Prof V Veluthambi, Co-Chair, GEAC, Dr. Luther Rangreji, Dr. B. Sesikeran, Prof S K Apte, Dr Vijay Kumar, ICMR, Dr. Ramesh Sonti as requested by them.

It was also informed that a communication has been received from Dr A K Pradhan that he will abstain from the meetings of the GEAC till the time the matters on GM mustard are under consideration in the GEAC.

**Agenda item No.2** : Confirmation of minutes of 127<sup>th</sup> meeting of the GEAC held on 05.02.2016

2.1 Minutes of the 127<sup>th</sup> meeting were circulated to all members on 08.02.2016. Minutes were confirmed without any amendments.

**Agenda item No.3** : Action taken report on the decision taken in the 127<sup>th</sup> GEAC Meeting

The Committee noted that pursuant to the 127<sup>th</sup> GEAC meeting, M/s. CGMCP, University of Delhi has submitted the revised biosafety dossier in respect of their application for environmental release of transgenic mustard. It was also noted that Coalition for a GM-Free India was invited to present their objections and concerns on the transgenic mustard application in the GEAC meeting but they have conveyed their regrets due to other prior commitments and have requested for an alternate date.

**Agenda Item No.4** : Application related to environmental release

4.1 **Consideration for permission for environmental release of transgenic mustard hybrid DMH-11 and parental lines containing events bn 3.6 and**

**modbs 2.99 developed using barnase, barstar and bar genes by M/s. CGMCP, University of Delhi**

- 4.1.1 The Committee noted that the observations of the Sub-committee in the meeting held on 02.02.2016 and points listed by the Biosafety Support Unit of the DBT was sent to the University of Delhi, with a direction that the DOSSIER be revised as per the comments/suggestions for further review by the Sub-committee and to prepare the risk assessment and risk management document for consideration of the GEAC. The Committee noted that the applicant has recently submitted the revised document and summary of the response has been circulated to all Members of GEAC. It was also noted that in the previous GEAC meeting it was decided that the revised document will be reviewed by the Sub-Committee for its completeness in all respect.

Advisor DBT informed that the review of the revised biosafety dossier by the Biosafety Support Unit set up by DBT is near completion and they will be in a position to circulate the draft risk assessment and risk management (RARM) report to the Members of the Sub-committee.

**Agenda item No.5: Consideration of applications for confined field trials of transgenic crops (Event selection/BRL-I/BRL-II) as recommended by the RCGM**

**5.1 Request for Event Selection Trial of insect resistant transgenic Chickpea events (IPCa2 & MP9) harbouring *Bt* gene (*cry1Ac* or *cry1Aabc*) developed at ICAR-Indian Institute of Pulses Research, Kanpur**

5.1.1 ICAR-Indian Institute of Pulses Research, Kanpur has requested for Event Selection Trial of insect resistant transgenic chickpea events (IPCa2 & MP9) harbouring *Bt* gene (*cry1Ac* or *cry1Aabc*)

5.1.2 As the proposal is yet to be considered by the RCGM, discussion on the proposal was deferred.

**5.2 Request for Event Selection Trial of insect resistant transgenic Pigeonpea events (IPCc2 & SS5) harbouring *Bt* gene (*cry1Ac* or *cry1Aabc*) developed at ICAR-Indian Institute of Pulses Research, Kanpur**

5.2.1 ICAR-Indian Institute of Pulses Research, Kanpur requested for Event Selection Trial of insect resistant transgenic Pigeonpea events (IPCc2 & SS5) harbouring *Bt* gene (*cry1Ac* or *cry1Aabc*)

5.2.2 As the proposal is yet to be considered by the RCGM, discussion on the proposal was deferred.

**Agenda Item No.6 : Any other item with permission of the Chair**

**6.1 Reconstitution of the Standing Committee to review applications for commercial release of Bt cotton hybrids expressing approved events**

6.1.1 The Committee noted that the GEAC had adopted the “Event Based Approval Mechanism (EBAM)” for regulating Bt cotton hybrids expressing approved events and had constituted a Standing Committee under the aegis of DBT to operationalize the new procedure on 16.04.2009 for a period of three years. Subsequently the tenure of the Standing Committee has been extended by the GEAC from time to time.

6.1.2 As DBT had indicated their constraints in organizing the meetings of the Standing Committee, the GEAC in its 123<sup>rd</sup> meeting had requested DDG, ICAR to setup an alternative mechanism under the AICCIP to evaluate the performance of approved Bt cotton events to ensure Bt cotton hybrids suitable to various agro-climatic zones are released at the earliest. In the interim period and in view of the seasonality involved, the GEAC requested DBT to service the Standing Committee with the same TOR and composition for one more season. Accordingly, the tenure of the Standing Committee was extended upto Kharif 2015. Proposal from ICAR is still awaited.

6.1.3 The Committee noted that the tenure of the Standing Committee constituted by the GEAC vide OM No. 13/39/2007-CS-II dated 13.03.2015 has expired and also took note of DBT 's communication dated 17.02.2016 regarding reconstitution of the Standing Committee. After detailed deliberations, the following decisions were taken:

- i. To reconstitute a new Committee comprising of the following members may be constituted under the Chairmanship of Dr. D Monga, Head, Central Institute for Cotton Research, Regional Station, Sirsa:
  - a) Representatives from CICR, Nagpur
  - b) Project Coordinator, AICCIP & Head, CICR Regional Station, Coimbatore
  - c) DORs from: PAU, Ludhiana; VNMAU, Parbhani; ANGRAU, AP; PJTSAU, Telangana
  - d) Director (Seeds), Deptt. Of Agri. & Cooperation, New Delhi
  - e) Representatives from ICAR (HQ)
- ii. The Committee further reiterated its earlier request to DG, ICAR to set up an alternate mechanism under the AICCIP to ensure that only Bt cotton hybrids suitable to various agro-climatic zones are released.

**6.2 Research Proposal on “Development of Protocols and Guidelines for Environmental Risk Assessment of Transgenic Crops to Non-target Insects in the Environment” submitted by ICRISAT.**

- 6.2.1 Member Secretary GEAC informed that this Ministry through the grants-in-aid scheme is supporting research programmes with a view to (i) promote basic and applied research in various facets of ecology and environment for the conservation of environment and natural resources of the country & (ii) plan, support and coordinate environmental research for enhancing the understanding of environment and ecology and devising strategies, solutions for environmental protection in identified thrust areas.
- 6.2.2 The appraisal and sanction of research projects is being done through an in-depth review by the Project Advisory Committee, independent peer-review by three empaneled experts and the APEX Committee as per the prescribed guidelines for research programs.
- 6.2.3 The proposal “Development of Protocols and Guidelines for Environmental Risk Assessment of Transgenic Crops to Non-target Insects in the Environment” submitted by ICRISAT is a commission project by the Ministry in view of its relevance to the environmental risk assessment of GE plants. The research proposal was recently considered by the Eco-system Research Programme Project Advisory Committee (EcRP PAC) in its meeting held on 29.02.2016 wherein it was recommended that views of GEAC experts be obtained for further consideration of the proposal.
- 6.2.4 It was agreed that the above proposal would be sent for review to the following Members with a request that the comments may be forwarded within two weeks:
1. Prof C R Babu Centre for Environmental Management of Degraded Ecosystems, School of Environmental Studies, DU, New Delhi
  2. Dr S S Banga, Punjab Agriculture University, Ludhiana
  3. Prof Renee Borges, Centre for Ecological Science, IIS, Bangalore
  4. Dr V V Ramamurthy, Former Professor, IARI, New Delhi
  5. Dr Viraktamath, Former Director, Indian Institute of Rice Research, Hyderabad.

The meeting ended with a vote of thanks to the Chair and Members.

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