

## STRONG SUPPORT BY EMINENT PEOPLE FOR CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE

### BY FARMERS WHO BREAKING LAWS TO DEMAND GM TECHNOLOGY

<http://swarnabharat.in/gm>



Details of ongoing disobedience at [#KisanSatyagraha](#) & <https://www.sabhlokcity.com/2019/06/continuing-civil-disobedience-by-farmers/>

#### THE POSITION OF MAJOR NEWSPAPERS

**Times of India** [editorial, 26 June 2019](#)

The experience of the last few months in Maharashtra and Haryana has shown that some farmers are no longer willing to pay the price for political paralysis. Indian agriculture is in urgent need of technological infusion. Transgenic crops are the obvious answer.

The best way forward is for government to follow the lead given by its regulator. End procrastination and approve transgenic brinjal, mustard and the next iteration of cotton.

**Financial Express** [editorial 11 June 2019](#)

While the government is within its rights to arrest Shetkari Sangathana farmers for breaking the law— they will then have to arrest thousands of farmers who are using HT seeds already—surely it owes the country an explanation for why its policies are so anti-farmer?

**Financial Express** [Managing Editor on 26 June 2019](#)

A team of Delhi University scientists led by former vice-chancellor Deepak Pental developed GM mustard and the GEAC approved this in May 2017 – so this was no longer a foreign company that had developed the technology and Pental was not even looking for royalty since NDDB had funded his research – but the BJP government has not cleared it for commercial [use] years for more than two years now. If decisions that are to be taken on the basis of scientific tests are to be taken on political grounds, why not abolish the GEAC?

[Further] If the central government didn't take any major action after its own panel found evidence of large-scale selling of illegal knockoffs – against either those growing and selling the seeds or the farmers growing cotton using them – it is difficult to understand why it is pushing for action against the Shetkari Sangathana now. More important, it needs to answer why farmers should be penalized for its failure to approve world-class technology in time. If the government is forced to give an explanation for its anti-seedtech policies, the Shetkari Sangathana has done the country a big favour.

**Sirf News, [25 June 2019](#)**

The farmers are the prime victims of the prevailing regulatory environment. The farmers are only pleading for the freedom to adopt the technology of their choice, be it GM, organic or zero budget, or any other practice.

**THE VIEWS OF MAJOR JOURNALISTS**

**Shekhar Gupta, ThePrint, [14 May 2019](#) (video at 12:17 minutes)**

India ... is indulging in this massive self-denial and damage to our farming because we are denying to the farmer benefits of technology which is now available.

**Vivian Fernandes, FirstPost, [14 May 2019](#)**

A *baingan* or brinjal with a foreign (*cry1Ac*) gene toxic to the fruit and shoot borer is no different from a conventional brinjal, the Genetic Engineering Approval Committee (GEAC) had said after two levels of bio-safety research level trials running into a few years. The gene was extracted from a commonly-occurring soil-bacterium, Bt for short. At its meeting in October 2009, it recommended the Bt brinjal for mass cultivation finding it to be safe for humans and animals. But for political reasons, Environment Minister, Jairam Ramesh, put the decision on hold.

**Sandipan Deb, former editor of 'Financial Express' and founder-editor of 'Open' and 'Swarajya' magazines, LiveMint, [28 June 2019](#)**

The PM must stand up to the anti-science obscurantism that is set to ruin our farmers

**Sayantana Bera, Livemint, [20 June 2019](#)**

"By resisting genetic engineering technologies, India risks falling behind the rest of the world where scientists are deploying gene editing tools to improve yields, disease resistance and shelf life of crops."

**Swami Aiyar, Times of India, [21 May 2019](#)**

The news item on the Haryana crackdown on GM brinjal spoke indignantly of laws violated and farmers duped. Yet, it revealed that dealers of GM brinjal saplings were charging seven times as much as for ordinary brinjal, which was susceptible to pests like shoot-borers.

Farmers of India, unite! Defy stupid laws prohibiting GM crops and grow them wherever pirated or smuggled seeds are available. That is what you did in the case of GM cotton in the 2000s. It ultimately forced the government, shamefacedly, to regularise what was till then illegal.

Sundry activists had published papers claiming to show that GM cotton was disastrous. Farmers rightly ignored these supposed research findings as ideological rubbish. In practice, cotton yields doubled even as pesticide use declined. Cotton acreage, production and exports shot up.

**Parthasarathi Biswas, The Indian Express, [20 June 2019](#)**

Either way, one thing is clear: Cotton growers don't need to be told about the benefits of HT cotton. They would want to plant it, with or without the government's approval.

**Kabir Agarwal**, *The Wire*, [9 June 2019](#)

The [anti-GM] groups ... argue that GM crops are harmful to the environment, biodiversity and to the human body if consumed. However, several studies over the years have shown that these fears are unfounded. In 2016, an [analysis](#) of 900 studies on the subject by the National Academies of Sciences found that GM crops were safe to use. "The committee concluded that no differences have been found that implicate a higher risk to human health safety from foods than from their non-GE counterparts," it concluded.

**M.R. Subramani**, Executive Editor, *Swarajya*, [10 June 2019](#)

"since the Narendra Modi government came to power in 2014, research on GM crops, food and non-food, have come to a halt.... The TEC hasn't recommended a moratorium on the ground that GM crop is unsafe."

#### THE POSITION OF POLITICAL/ FARMER LEADERS

**Sharad Joshi**, founder of Shetkari Sangathana and of Swatantra Bharat Party - as reported in [New Scientist 28 March 2002](#)

[When Bt Cotton was approved in 2002] "This is like the fall of the Berlin Wall for Indian agriculture," Sharad Joshi, founder of the Maharashtra-based farmer's organisation Shetkari Sanghatana, told New Scientist. "Farmers have been deprived of new technology for a long time but now they will have access to it."

**Anil Ghanwat**, agricultural science graduate, farmer and President of Shetkari Sangathana, - as reported in *FirstPost* on [14 June 2019](#)

"India imports Canola oil from Canada, which is obtained from GM seeds. A dozen GM crops like maize, soya, cotton have been planted across the world and millions of people and livestock have been eating these for the past two decades. There is no evidence of any adverse impact on their health. Why can't Indian farmers grow HTBT cotton?"

**Sanjeev Sabhlok**, former IAS (1982 batch), economist and founder of Swarna Bharat Party

1. *Times of India* blog [14 May 2019](#): Our party insists on the rule of law but like Mahatma Gandhi broke salt laws to protest an oppressive British government, we support the plans of farmers to break this oppressive and anti-farmer moratorium. To prevent the need for this civil disobedience action, we ask the government to immediately ratify the 2009 regulatory approval of Bt brinjal.
2. *Times of India* blog [19 June 2019](#): If Mr Modi wants to double farmers' incomes, he must first promote biotechnology... Mr Modi must put his cards on the table soon: does he want to take India into extreme poverty through organic farming or convert 99 per cent of our population into a highly innovative and productive force?

#### THE POSITION OF BIOTECHNOLOGISTS

**CS Prakash** ([June 11, 2019](#), reported in *Times of India* blogs)

"GM crops have been proven as safe if not safer than those from conventional crop breeding. They go through years of regulatory safety studies. GM crops promote biodiversity as more varieties offered

for farmers, wild ecosystem prospers too because of less chemical usage and need for less forest land to be cut.”

Further, he believes that: “Indian government has marginalized the voice of farmers in shaping biotech policies and instead listens to NGOs many of whom are anti-development, handicapping our farmers by denying her the tools needed to produce, to compete. Let the policymakers, media and public recognize that farmers too need continued innovation just as in other fields.”

**Ashok Gulati**, [24 June 2019](#) (Infosys Chair professor for Agriculture at ICRIER)

Unfortunately, governments, since Independence, no matter how much they swear by the name of farmers, have constrained our farmers when it comes to access to the best farm technologies as well as the best markets.

GMOs have been there on the global platform since 1996 and by 2017, for which I have the latest data, almost 190 million hectares around the world are being planted. There are no cases of human death, disease, or injury.

The Vajpayee government examined the whole issue from a biosafety perspective as well as farmers’ needs. Then, it took a bold decision on March 26, 2002, to legally allow the planting of Bt cotton, the first GM crop of India and the only one so far. He extended the original slogan of ‘Jai Jawan, Jai Kisan’, given by Lal Bahadur Shastri, to include ‘Jai Vigyan’.

It won’t be an exaggeration to say that Bt cotton has been the secret force behind Modi’s political successes. Considering this, can India now, under Modi 2.0, emerge as a leader in bio-farm technologies, including GMO? Only time will tell.

**Prof. G. Padmanabhan**, former director and now honorary professor at Bengaluru’s Indian Institute of Science, [14 May 2019](#)

He insisted that “there were absolutely no side-effects of consuming Bt crop. Bt Brinjal is made of the same gene which is inserted in Bt corn, and people in Argentina, United States, Canada, Brazil and South Africa have been eating Bt corn since the last 15-20 years,” the leading biotechnologist said.

**Deepak Pental**, geneticist and former vice-chancellor of the University of Delhi, who developed the publicly funded GM mustard DMH-11

1. Cited in *ThePrint* on [14 May 2019](#)

“There is no study available to prove the side effects of GM food, and the GEAC has checked the efficacy of the product already.”

2. Interview in *The Hindu* on [7 June 2017](#)

Just as people have health problems, crops have diseases and manipulating genes is necessary to address them.

3. Cited in *Livemint* on [20 June 2019](#)

“We have 60-odd agriculture universities and 100-plus public institutions doing agriculture research, and if they are not going to engage with new developments, they should be shut down,” Pental said,

adding that India is de-skilling itself by not taking up either fundamental or applied research. "You need technology in space, military, telecom, medicines but you don't need technology in agriculture... What is happening is atrociously ridiculous."

**Cornell Alliance for Science**, [17 June 2019](#)

While Bt brinjal is already grown in Bangladesh, other Bt food crops such as corn are grown from the Philippines to Spain to North and South America. India has been successfully cultivating Bt cotton for many years. Herbicide-tolerant cotton is also grown widely, from Australia to the United States.

There is also a worldwide consensus that the GM crops currently on the market are as safe as any other, and that their adoption around the world has helped deliver environmental improvements.

[I]t may be difficult for the Indian government to countenance locking up large numbers of farmers when their only crime is growing seeds that are already in widespread use elsewhere in the world — especially when doing so would be to kowtow to groups with an explicit anti-development agenda.

**Arif Hossain**, [26 May 2019](#) in *The Wire*

The ... study ... found that the net returns per hectare were \$2,151 (1.5 lakh Indian rupees) for Bt brinjal as opposed to \$357 (25,000 Indian rupees) for non-Bt brinjal, meaning Bt brinjal farmers were earning [six-times as much](#) as their non-Bt counterparts per year.

**Jagadish Mittur**, biotechnologist, quoted in *ThePrint*, [10 June 2019](#)

"If it's human tests that are needed, we just have to look at Bangladesh, where they've been safely consuming Bt Brinjal for years now".

Food safety and biodiversity concerns are unfounded, stressed Mittur, adding that decreased use of pesticide by Bt crops actually decreases the loss of other insects and life, lowering the loss of biodiversity.

## WHAT FARMERS ARE SAYING

**Ravichandran**, farmer, his article in *ThePrint* [9 June 2019](#).

I have been growing cotton since 1986 and Bt Cotton since 2004. Before Bt Cotton, I cultivated non-Bt, open-pollinated varieties and non-Bt hybrids. I am scared to think of the time when I was growing non-Bt cotton.

In those days, cotton farmers had to spray several rounds of various insecticides.

**Laxmikant Kauthakar**, a farmer cited in Financial Express, [27 June 2019](#)

When reminded of the stiff penal provisions of the Environment Protection Act, 1986, Kauthakar said, "It is not about me. There are no jobs. Business is competitive. Our children don't want to do agriculture. They are rushing to the cities." He said there was a shortage of labour and costs of manual weeding were high. "Whatever technology is there in the world should be available to us. This is our right."