

Minutes of the 11th Meeting of the Standing Committee to evaluate applications for commercial release of Bt cotton hybrids expressing approved events under ‘Event based approval mechanism (EBAM)’ held in DBT, New Delhi on 24th March, 2014

The 11th meeting of the Standing Committee to review applications for commercial release of Bt cotton hybrids expressing approved events under ‘Event based approval mechanism (EBAM)’ was held on 24th March, 2014 in Room No. 727, Department of Biotechnology, New Delhi under the Chairmanship of Dr. N. Gopalakrishnan, ADG (Commercial Crops), ICAR, New Delhi. The list of participants was as under:

Members

1. Dr. Dilip Monga, Head, CICR Regional Station, Sirsa, Haryana
2. Dr. Punit Mohan, Principal Scientist, CICR, Nagpur
3. Dr A.H. Parakash, Project Co-coordinator (Cotton), AICCIP, CICR, RS, Coimbatore
4. Prof. Ramesh Gumber, Addl. Director of Research & Head, Plant Breeding, PAU, Ludhiana
5. Dr S.J. Rahman, Principal Scientist & Head, AICRP on Biological Control, Agri. Research Institute (ARI), ANGRAU, Hyderabad
6. Shri R. K.Mishra, Director (Seeds), Department of Agriculture & Cooperation, Ministry of Agriculture, Krishi Bhavan, New Delhi
7. Dr. S R Rao, Member Secretary, RCGM & Scientist-G, DBT
8. Mrs. Rajalakshmi Muralidharan, Member Secretary, Standing Committee & Scientist-E, DBT

B. Special Invitees

1. Dr. Amit Parikh, Scientist-C, DBT
2. Sh. Sunil Naik, JA, DBT

Welcome Remarks by the Chairman

The Chairman, Standing Committee extended a formal welcome to the members of the Standing Committee and initiated the process of the meeting. The Chairman observed that GEAC has reconstituted the Standing Committee with more experts viz, representatives from Ministry of Agriculture, SAUs, AICCIP etc. and therefore DBT-MoEF-ICAR-MoA are jointly involved in the review of applications for commercial release of Bt cotton hybrids of approved events. This gives strength to the Committee in taking appropriate decisions. In order to apprise the new members, the Chairman gave a brief account of the purpose and terms of reference (TOR) of the Standing Committee.

Remarks/Views by the Members

Members deliberated on the issue of stagnation of cotton yield for the past few years. They also pointed that biotech stress, mainly by CLCuV disease, play a major role in the reduction of cotton yield in North Zone. They also discussed on the multiplicity of Bt cotton hybrids in the market and how to tackle this problem. They suggested that while evaluating the applications for commercial release, importance should be given to some specific parameters such as CLCuV resistance, yield advantage in comparison to the best

Bt check, suitability to rainfed or irrigated areas, incidence of boll damage etc. They also suggested that two years SAU data is required for confirmation of the performance of the hybrid in terms of yield as well as bollworm complex damage. The Committee also observed that scientific evaluation of Bt cotton hybrids will be difficult if CD and CV for statistical analysis are not submitted and respective check hybrids (HxH or HxB as the case may be) are not included in the field trials. Members also noted that the tenure of the Standing Committee has been extended by GEAC for a period of four months i.e. upto 19.6.2014.

Recommendations of the Bt cotton hybrids to State Agri. Departments

The Committee observed that 231 applications have been received against the ‘Call for Applications’ for North, Central and South Zones and the scrutiny of all applications in a single day is very difficult. The Committee therefore decided unanimously that the recommendations on Central and South Zone applications will be made only in the next meeting.

The Committee scrutinized the applications for North Zone taking into consideration the TOR of the Committee stipulated by GEAC and the parameters mentioned in the ‘Call for Applications’ published on the DBT Biosafety Website.

The Committee considered the following parameters while making recommendations for commercial release of the Bt. Cotton hybrids expressing four approved events under EBAM for the consideration of the different State Agriculture Departments in North Zone under intimation to the GEAC:

1. Confirmation of gene/ event through molecular characterization by the licensor that the gene/s which is being used is one of the approved events (LOC in original)
2. Level of protein expression in green house and field trials
3. Morphological characters using DUS descriptors as per PPVF&RA guidelines
4. Bio-efficacy data generated in laboratory conditions
5. Authorization certificate/ No Objection Certificate (NOC) in original from technology provider in case of sub-licensee
6. Affidavits duly signed by the Notary on Stamp Paper
7. Field trial data of the particular hybrid at least for one year from one SAU per State of the particular Zone; besides yield parameters, the data on quality aspects as well as reaction of test hybrid against insects and diseases as recorded under AICCIP; Seed cotton yield should be superior to the best check.
8. Data on tolerance of Bt cotton hybrids to CLCuV in North Zone as evaluated by SAU Centre in North Zone/CICR, Sirsa

The Committee decided that Bt cotton hybrids which are CLCuV tolerant, giving statistically higher yield than the best performing Bt check, and bollworm complex damage free, in the SAU/ICAR trial, should only be recommended for commercial release to the respective State Agriculture Departments in North Zone, and not for the entire Zone, under EBAM.

Based on the SAU/ICAR reports, the Committee recommended the Bt cotton hybrids for commercial release in respective States in North Zone. The Committee directed the

Member Secretary to issue the recommendation letters to different State Agriculture Departments in North Zone, State-wise, for recommended Bt cotton hybrids under intimation to GEAC, on the same lines as in the previous meeting.

Other items with the permission of the Chair:

- 1. To put in place a procedure for review of the Bt cotton hybrids approved by the Standing Committee, and based on the review, recommend to the GEAC, the list of Bt cotton hybrids whose approval may be withdrawn (as per the OM received from Ministry of Environment & Forests, New Delhi dated 20.2.2014).*

The Committee directed the Member Secretary to prepare a consolidated list of Bt cotton hybrids recommended for withdrawal, voluntarily by the applicants, for consideration in the next meeting.

With the above, the meeting ended with thanks to the Chair. The minutes are approved with incorporation of suggestions and modifications.

Sd/-
(Dr. N. Gopalakrishnan)
Chairman, Standing Committee &
ADG (Commercial Crops), ICAR, New Delhi

Place: New Delhi
Date: 01.04.2014