

Minutes of the 10th Meeting of the Standing Committee to review applications for commercial release of Bt cotton hybrids expressing approved events under 'Event based approval mechanism (EBAM)' held in DBT, New Delhi on 16th May, 2012

The 10th 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 16th May, 2012 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:

A. Members

Dr. Dilip Monga, Head, CICR Regional Station, Sirsa, Haryana
Dr. Punit Mohan, Principal Scientist, CICR, Nagpur
Dr. Shruti Rai Bhardwaj, Deputy Director, M/o Environment & Forests, New Delhi
Mrs. Rajalakshmi Muralidharan, Member Secretary, Standing Committee & Scientist-D, DBT

B. Special Invitees

Dr. Nitin Kumar Jain, Scientist-D, DBT

Welcome Remarks by the Chairman

Dr. N. Gopalakrishnan, Chairman, Standing Committee extended a formal welcome to all members of Standing Committee for the tenth meeting and initiated the process of the meeting.

Action taken report by the Member- Secretary

Member Secretary informed in brief about the action taken on the minutes of the previous meeting of the Standing Committee held on 13.04.2012. It was also informed that necessary follow up action was taken on the recommendations of the Standing Committee in its 9th meeting and recommendation letters were issued to State Agriculture Departments/applicants under intimation to the GEAC.

Recommendations of the Bt cotton hybrids to referral laboratories

The Standing Committee scrutinized the applications for Central and South Zones taking into consideration the TOR of the Committee stipulated by GEAC and the additional 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 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 the concerned SAU
8. Data on tolerance of Bt cotton hybrids to CLCuV in North Zone (only for hybrids to be released in North Zone) as evaluated by SAU Centre in North Zone/CICR, Sirsa

The Committee observed that bollworm complex damage has been reported in several SAU reports in Central Zone. The Committee unanimously decided that the hybrids, which showed considerable bollworm complex damage in many centres, should not be recommended in Central Zone. The Committee also decided that hybrids which are free from bollworm complex damage, and showed higher yield than the best performing Bt check in the SAU/ICAR trial reports, shall be recommended for commercial release to the respective State Agriculture Departments, and not for the entire zone, under EBAM.

The Committee opined that two years SAU data is required for confirmation of the performance of the hybrids, especially in view of plenty of applications being submitted making the process of evaluation very cumbersome besides the issue of bollworm complex damage / suitability to rainfed / irrigated conditions. The Committee also observed that evaluation of Bt cotton hybrids by some SAUs are technically deficient by non-submission of CD and CV for statistical analysis and respective check hybrids (HxH or HxB as the case may be). These issues, as pointed out in the earlier proceedings, need urgent attention by the GEAC in order to further fine-tune and streamline the process of evaluation by EBAM.

Based on the SAU/ICAR trial report, the Committee categorized the applications for commercial release of Bt cotton hybrids in respective States of Central and South Zones under two Sets as under:

- Set 1- Recommended cases: SAU/ICAR trial data is available, yield of the hybrid is at par or better than the high yielding Bt check, and bollworm complex damage free.
- Set 2- Deferred till the decision of GEAC is received: SAU/ICAR data is partially available or non-available, yield of the hybrid is lower than the check, and hybrid showed bollworm complex damage.

Based on the SAU/ICAR reports, the Committee recommended the Bt cotton hybrids for commercial release in respective States in Central and South Zones as per Annexure-1. The decision on the applications, which come under Set-2, was deferred till the decision of GEAC on the specific clarifications sought/revision of TOR is received. The Committee directed the Member Secretary to issue the recommendation letters to different State Agriculture Departments in North, Central and South Zones, State-wise, for recommended Bt cotton hybrids under intimation to GEAC, on the same lines in the previous meeting.

Other items with the permission of the Chair:

1. Clarification submitted by M/s. Superseeds regarding the bioefficacy data in their applications for commercial release of Bt cotton hybrids SS 333 and SS 119 in North Zone

The Committee considered the clarification and based on the SAU report in terms of performance of the hybrids, CLCuV data, and bollworm complex damage, recommended for commercial release of SS 333 and SS 119 in Haryana only in North Zone.

2. Request from M/s. Monsanto Holdings Pvt. Ltd. to reconsider their application for commercial release of Bt cotton hybrid DPC 3081 BGII in Punjab and Haryana in North Zone

The Committee considered the application and SAU reports and based on the performance of the hybrid, bollworm complex damage and CLCuV data, DPC 3081 Bt cotton hybrid was recommended for commercial release in Punjab only in North Zone.

3. Request from M/s. Rasi Seeds for approval for commercial release of RCH 773 BGII in Rajasthan

The Committee recommended that the applicant may re-evaluate the proposed hybrid in the respective SAU for one more season to verify the bollworm complex damage in Bt cotton hybrid and submit the SAU report for further consideration.

4. Request from M/s. Rasi Seeds (P) Ltd. to accept the original SAU reports i.e. without CD, CV, page-wise signatures etc.

The Committee considered the request as well as communication from UAS, Dharwad addressed to the applicant and remarked that statistical analysis with CD and CV is an integral part of the SAU report.

5. Request from M/s. Kirtiman Agro Genetics Ltd. requesting for clarification on the districts of Rajasthan State covered under Central Zone for commercial cultivation of Bt cotton hybrids

The Committee advised the applicant to seek guidance/clarification from MPUAT, Udaipur on the matter.

The Committee members unanimously thanked the authorities of GEAC, DBT and ICAR for the support extended and confidence reposed in the Committee. The Committee strongly desired that a new EBAM Committee consisting of new members may kindly be constituted by GEAC at the earliest for considering the EBAM applications henceforth with renewed TOR and guidelines along with earlier suggested parameters, if found suitable, for evaluation of transgenic cotton hybrids of approved events.

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: 22.05.2012