

Minutes of the 4th 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 on 7th May, 2010 in DBT, New Delhi

The 4th 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 7th May, 2010 in Department of Biotechnology, New Delhi under the Chairmanship of Dr. P. Balasubramanian, Professor, Centre for Plant Molecular Biology (CPMB), TNAU, Coimbatore. The list of participants is enclosed at Annexure-1.

Welcome Remarks by the Chairman

Dr. P. Balasubramanian, Chairman, Standing Committee extended a formal welcome to all members of Standing Committee for the 4th meeting and initiated the process of the meeting.

Leave of Absence

The Committee noted that Dr. K. R. Kranthi had informed that he would be not be able to attend the meeting. Leave of absence was granted to Dr. Kranthi.

Action taken report by the Member- Secretary

Member Secretary distributed the Action Taken Report of the 3rd Standing Committee meeting held on 12.03.2010. It was informed by the Member-Secretary that necessary follow up action was taken on the recommendations of the Standing Committee in its 3rd meeting and letters were issued to State Agriculture Departments/applicants.

Remarks/Views by the Members

The members expressed their concern to the large number of applications as well as hybrids received by the Standing Committee for consideration. The committee stressed the need of certification of hybrids by State Agriculture Departments and State Agricultural Universities before these hybrids reach the market/ farmers. The Committee noted that in the 3rd meeting of the Standing Committee, a recommendation was made that one year SAU trial is necessary and the TOR for the Standing Committee should be revised accordingly. The committee re-emphasized the need of one year SAU trial and directed the Member-Secretary to take up the issue with GEAC for necessary action. The members observed that the number of hybrids in the market is too many and therefore the committee felt that the number of hybrids per recognized R&D seed firms should be restricted.

The committee observed that M/s. JK Seeds have intimated that they have forwarded the recommended hybrids for testing at CICR, Nagpur along with event specific primer sequence details and deposited the prescribed fee. But no response has been received from M/s. Nath Seeds/ M/s. Global Transgenes Ltd. Aurangabad regarding this stipulated condition of GEAC.

The Committee deliberated on the issue and directed the Member-Secretary to issue the permission letters for the recommended hybrids of M/s. Nath Seeds/ M/s. Global Transgenes Ltd. Aurangabad and their sub-licensees only after confirmation of complying with the stipulated conditions by these applicants.

The Committee also noted that in the 3rd meeting, decision has already been taken unanimously that in future CICR will depute some technical person to collect seed samples of recommended hybrids from open market for scientific scrutiny and verification of the claims of the applicants and the applicants should deposit the fee with CICR and get the fee receipt for record. The applicants/agriculture Departments are not required to send samples separately for event testing/confirmation henceforth for the fresh applications.

Recommendations of the Bt cotton hybrids to referral laboratories

Various applications submitted by the applicants were considered by the Standing-Committee taking into account the TOR (Terms of Reference) of the Committee. The Standing Committee kept in view the following parameters for evaluating and deciding the commercial release of the Bt. Cotton hybrids expressing four approved events under 'event based approval mechanism (EBAM) while making recommendations for the consideration of the different State Agriculture Departments with information to GEAC:

- a) Confirmation of gene/ event through molecular characterization by the licensor that the gene/s which is being used is one of the approved events;
- b) Level of protein expression in green house and field trials;
- c) Morphological characters using DUS descriptors as per PPVF&RA guidelines;
- d) Bio-efficacy data generated in laboratory conditions;
- e) Authorization certificate/ No Objection Certificate (NOC) from technology provider in case of sub-licensee; and
- f) The Standing Committee shall lay down rules and procedure for submission of application and conduct of the meetings.

Based on the stipulations of GEAC, the Standing Committee recommended different hybrids in North and Central Zones for their biosafety clearance as per Annexure-II. The committee recommended that the applications for South Zone will be considered in the next meeting.

The committee deliberated on the request from various seed companies for inclusion of South Rajasthan (Banswara region) in the Central Zone for release of Bt. Cotton hybrids approved for commercialization. The committee also noted the contents of the OM received from the GEAC dated 27.11.2009. The committee recommended that Banswara region in South Rajasthan can be considered under Central zone for the purpose of cultivation of Bt cotton hybrids recommended for Central Zone, the Standing Committee decided that this shall be effective from 17.04.2009 only. The Committee directed the Member-Secretary to request GEAC to provide clarification as para 2 & 3 of the OM dated 27.11.2009 are contradictory in nature as in para-2 the zonal restriction is mentioned on the basis of agro-climatic factors but in para-3, it has been indicated that "there is no zonal restriction with the adoption of the EBAM. Applicants may request for release of Bt cotton hybrids for any region". The committee also observed that the hybrids approved for Central & South Zones cannot be approved for North Zone until they are field evaluated on account of CLCuV problems in North Zone. The application submitted by M/s. Nuziveedu Seeds Pvt. Ltd., Hyderabad and M/s. Prabhat Agri Biotech Ltd., Hyderabad quoting GEAC OM dated 27.11.2009 will be considered after obtaining the clarification from GEAC.

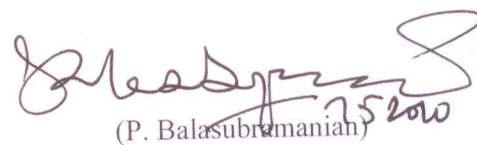
The members deliberated on the complaint received from M/s. Rasi Seeds Pvt. Ltd., Attur regarding the illegal use of proprietary cotton hybrid RCH-2 parents by M/s. JK Agri Genetics Ltd., Hyderabad for JK-99 BG-II Bt cotton hybrids. The committee advised M/s. Rasi Seeds to approach PPV&FRA to confirm their claim and settlement of dispute relating to plant protection, as PPV&FRA is the constitutional authority having the discretionary power to evaluate the DUS characteristics.

It was noticed by the Committee that many firms preferred for including a lot of hybrids in one single application. This causes hardship in evaluation of the data provided. Hence, one application form shall contain data pertaining to single hybrid.

The committee considered the application of M/s. Kohinoor Seeds for marketing the Bt cotton hybrids developed by M/s. Amar Biotech and recommended the same as the applicant has complied with all stipulated conditions. The permit letter should be issued to M/s. Kohinoor Seeds with a copy to M/s. Amar Biotech.

With the above, the meeting ended with thanks to the Chair.

The minutes approved/ ~~approved with minor modifications.~~



(P. Balasubramanian)

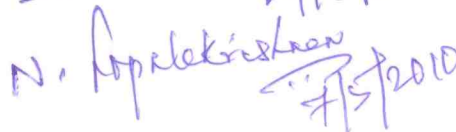
Chairman, Standing Committee &
Professor, CPMB, TNAU, Coimbatore

Members:

1. Dr. Dilip Monga,
Head, CICR, Sirsa.

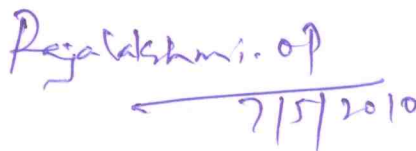


2. Dr. N. Gopalakrishnan
Head, CICR, Coimbatore.



3. Dr. K.K. Tripathi
Scientist-G, DBT

4. Mrs. Rajalakshmi Muralidharan,
Scientist D, DBT



Place: New Delhi
Date: 07.05.2010