Scientists told to clear doubts on GM crops

Union Agriculture Secretary calls for centre for excellence in plant breeding

It is the responsibility of the scientists to communicate with the people and clear their apprehensions on genetically modified crops, Union Agriculture Secretary S.K. Pattanayak said. Addressing the concluding session of the two-day programme on ‘Crop Genomics: Present and Future’ at International Crops Research Institute Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT) here on Friday, Mr. Pattanayak said that GM crops are not harmful and there was need for it to be communicated to the people.

Farmers are not averse to cultivating these crops and this was proved with the cultivation of BT cotton, which was one of the GM crops, the Secretary Union Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers’ Welfare added. “Genomics will offer greater advantage and it has diagnosed the requirement. Now it was our responsibility to come up with solutions to the problem. There is a need to establish centre for excellence in plant breeding,” he said.

India has become self-sufficient in pulses production and it was expected to produce 24 million tonnes this year, he said and opined that we have failed in using the hybrid technologies to the optimal level. Eminent scientist and former director-general of Indian Council for Agriculture Research (ICAR) R.S. Paroda, made a presentation on the steps need to be taken up for grabbing the opportunities being thrown up by genomics.

Food security

“Higher yield for food security, better quality for nutritional security and adaptation for climate change are the need of the hour and this can be done under public private partnership (PPP) mode. Translation of research into field level is a must and we have to make innovations in crop improvement,” he said adding that there need be to focus on strengthening the breeding system. ICRISAT Director-General David Bergvinson, Deputy Director-General Peter Carberry and Research Programme Director, Genetic Gains, Rajeev Varshney and others were present. Read more