



‘Super weeds infesting crores of acres’

Our Bureau

Hyderabad, Sept. 27:

The war of words over the efficacy of genetically modified (GM) food continues with several scientists and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) making light of the claims made by the pro-GM groups.

Addressing a press conference here on Thursday on the sidelines of an international conference on ‘Can GM crops meet India’s food security and export markets?’ they said alternative and sustainable methods of farming were being neglected by governments.

“More productive technologies are not being supported. Policies are discouraging such methods. Public expenditure on agricultural research is coming down,” Walter Goldstein, Executive Director at Mandaamin Institute (the US), has said.

“The path of adopting widespread use of GM technology in the United States has been accompanied by greater consolidation of resources and power for a few seed companies, higher seed prices, greater risk for farmers and less choice in varieties,” he said.

Asked whether GM was an answer for the growing food needs of humanity, Dough Gurian-Sherman, a senior scientist with Food and Environment Programme of Union of Concerned Scientists (the US), has said that there was no evidence to prove that point.

In fact, conventional breeding techniques can address the problem well, he pointed out.

“Super weeds (glyphosate-resistant or herbicide-resistant weeds) are infesting millions of acres in the US. There has been a cumulative pesticide use increase by about 17.4 crore kg even though GM crops are often promoted as pesticide-reducing crops,” Kavitha Kuruganti of Alliance for Sustainable and Holistic Agriculture, said.

“A comparison between America and Western Europe with similar growing conditions reveals corn yields that are not significantly different, despite the US opting for GM corn. Europe is outpacing US without resorting to GM when it comes to future yield projections,” Jack Heinemann, of University of Canterbury Christchurch (New Zealand), said.

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