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Time to embrace evergreen agriculture?

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Green revolution has become ecologically, economically unsustainable, feels scholar

Has the time come for abandoning the green revolution and embracing the idea of ‘evergreen agriculture’? Hans R. Herren, President of the Millennium Institute in Washington and President of the Biovision Foundation in Zurich, Switzerland, thinks so.

In his keynote address at the International Scientific Seminar on “Can GM Crops Meet India’s Food Security and Export Markets?” — organised against the background of the Conference of Parties of the Convention on Biodiversity meeting here next month — Professor Herren said the agriculture was at crossroads globally.

Soil degradation, water shortages and biodiversity loss were causing serious problems all over the world, Prof. Herren said. Industrialisation of agriculture had led to the loss of a large number of jobs. Problems such as production in excess of needs and wastage characterised the agriculture sector today.

Extreme weather events and temperature and water stress too posed a problem.

“We are overstepping planetary boundaries. Yet, more than 50 per cent of smallholder farmers are going hungry.”

Prof. Herren said the situation called for a paradigm change — a transition to sustainable eco-agriculture or ‘evergreen agriculture’ under a systematic and holistic approach.

Animals should be brought back to farms Even while adopting an agro-ecological approach, which encompassed

organic farming and other practices, mechanisation could be adopted to lighten the workload, especially for women. Research should be in the public domain.

Evergreen agriculture, Prof. Herren argued, would lead to increase in production, employment and greater area under crops. Deforestation would come down.

Giving the closing address, Pushpa Mittra Bhargava, former vice-chancellor, National Knowledge Commission, said an extended moratorium should be given to GM trials for all crops. The recommendations of the Parliamentary Committee in this respect should be accepted, Ms. Bhargava said.

A laboratory should be set up in the country to test whether an agriculture produce was genetically modified or not. There should also be a monitoring mechanism.

The conference called for increased efforts in persuading governments to favour a switch to organic farming. It was hosted by Aruna Rodrigues — lead petitioner in the case seeking a moratorium on genetically-modified organisms before the Supreme Court — along with the Tara Foundation and the European Network of Scientists for Social and Environmental Responsibility.

Keywords: [International Scientific Seminar](#), [food security](#), [green revolution](#)

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