

## Kerala reiterates its NO to GM crops and foods



### ***Government of Kerala will not allow GM crops & foods: Kerala CM"***

***Trivandrum, April 11, 2008:*** Speaking at the inauguration of a two-day national seminar on "GM Crops & Biodiversity Conservation" organised by the Kerala State Biodiversity Board, the Chief Minister of Kerala, Sri V S Achuthanandan assured the people of Kerala that no policy which will have adverse impact on farmers and/or environment will be brought in by the government, including GM (Genetically Modified) crops.

After two days of deliberations on all aspects related to GM crops, the seminar concluded resolving that "release of GM crops into the environment and GM foods into the market should be banned to protect the health, agriculture and biodiversity of the nation". At the concluding ceremony today, this declaration was endorsed by the Minister for Agriculture Sri Mullakkara Ratnakaran who pointed out that the government cannot consciously restrict choices of farmers by introducing GM crops or allowing their field trials.

The workshop was attended by more than 150 delegates consisting of representatives of different State Biodiversity Boards, farmers and farmer organizations, agricultural scientists, educationists, students, consumer organizations, industry and civil society organizations. The meeting discussed at length issues like GM crops & Biodiversity, GM crops & Food sovereignty, Health Hazards of GM crops and biosafety regulation, Genetic Contamination from GE crops and IPR issues. Existing official data on economics of GM crops were also discussed.

Participants in the workshop also pointed out that it is not possible for Kerala alone to be GM-Free if neighboring states allow GM crops and that a precautionary approach to GM crops is needed at the national level.



Farmers and civil society groups taking part in the seminar pointed out that they had several large scale ecological farming experiences being successfully established in Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra and Kerala and given that such alternatives exist, there is no necessity for bringing in GM crops.

The meeting passed a "Kerala declaration on GM crops and Biodiversity" unanimously in the presence of the State Agriculture Minister.

### **KERALA DECLARATION ON GM CROPS & BIODIVERSITY**

A two day national seminar convened by the Kerala State Biodiversity Board on 10 and 11 April 2008 at Trivandrum on **GM crops & Biodiversity Conservation**, attended by more than 150 delegates consisting of representatives of different State Biodiversity Boards, farmers and farmer organizations, agricultural scientists, educationists, students, consumer organizations, industry and civil society organizations,

**After** critically examining the following impacts of Genetically Modified crops (including Bt Cotton in India and other GM crops elsewhere in the world):

- genetic contamination of existing seed diversity and erosion of biodiversity,
- endangering of the diversity of crops for some of which India is the Centre of Origin,
- threatening the integrity of natural ecosystems
- irreversible and deleterious human health effects from GM crops/foods and adverse effects on other living organisms

- systematic monopolization of seed and other resources by a handful of large corporate bodies, to the extent that even future public research is jeopardized and farmers' *a priori* rights completely violated
- and thus, making farming unviable economically and ecologically for farmers

**And**, realising the critical importance that biodiversity plays

- in sustaining livelihoods along with farmers' traditional knowledge,
- in maintaining and enhancing food, nutrition and livelihood security of the country and rural communities,
- in creating resilient systems in the era of climate change, especially at a time when the country is experiencing the ecological disaster attendant to green revolution,
- in making farming economically and ecologically viable for farmers

**And**, recognising that genetic engineering in agriculture is imprecise, irreversible, uncontrollable and unpredictable and realizing the importance of precautionary principle as a guiding principle in this matter,

**Declares that release of GM crops into the environment and GM foods into the market should be banned to protect the health, agriculture and biodiversity of the nation.**