

Call for balanced policies to maximise benefits of GM crops

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Agricultural experts have said that formulating balanced technology policies are crucial to maximising benefits from GM crops. During a discussion on genome editing, biosafety for product development and socioeconomic considerations at the 16th Agricultural Science Con-

gress, they said the sector needed broader and multi-dimensional framework to understand the net social value of technology in the field and suggested greater consultations between agri-bio scientists and social scientists.

Risk assessment

R. Ramakumar of the Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai, and member

of the Kerala State Planning Board said government research establishments in the country should take adequate care for risk assessment, management, hazard identification, and socio-cultural impact of agricultural technologies.

“Understanding socioeconomics and sustainability implications are very much required for upscal-

ing upcoming technologies on genomics in the agriculture sector,” he said. Referring to the example of Bt cotton experience in India, he said the technology was not a failure as widely perceived.

However, the experience can be utilised to bridge the disconnect between technology regime and policy discourse.

Hence, social impacts

like displacement and inequality can be addressed adequately, he said.

Mr. Ramakumar also focused on the need to exercise due diligence on matters regarding the political economy of ownership of the technology.

Applications of the best science and technology, including in areas of agri-bio, agri-tech and food-tech, are required to pro-

duce more food from less land to meet the growing demand for food sustainably, said Michael Jones from Murdoch University, Australia.

“The genetic potential of crop plants in the field underlies all these technologies, and genome or gene editing is providing exciting new opportunities for genetic crop improvement,” he said.