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To  
The Editor,

Date: 12-4-2018

Sir,

I request that the following matter may kindly be published in your esteemed daily:

### **State Level Bio-safety Capacity Building Workshop**

A state level biosafety capacity building workshop was conducted by Tamil Nadu Agricultural University, Coimbatore on March 23, 2018, in association with Biotech Consortium India Limited (BCIL), New Delhi. The workshop was supported by Global Environment Facility of United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP-GEF) and Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC), Govt. of India.

The workshop was introduced to the participants by the Chief General Manager of BCIL, Dr. Vibha Ahuja. She informed that India is a party to Cartagena protocol on biosafety and accessed funds from UNEP-GEF for strengthening biosafety management system in India. A series of 15 State level biosafety capacity building workshops are being organized to disseminate project outputs at state level. This workshop is eighth such event in the series being conducted in TNAU. MoEFCC under the Phase-II project has strengthened GMO detection capacity and supported four referral laboratories for detection of GMOs. One such GMO detection referral lab is situated in Kochi.

Dr. Veluthambi in his key-note address, said that the production capacity of several crops has been saturated and there is a need to take up emerging technologies. Also knowledge on biosafety regulations needs to be enhanced for harnessing benefits of these technologies. He opined that, it is not true that farmers are against GMO technology, quoting Bt cotton adaptation. Suggested ways to overcome apprehension for GMO crops, by 1) when Govt officials and scientists say GMO crop is good, public accepted - quoting the example of introduction of Bt brinjal in Bangladesh which was developed in India. 2) State Agricultural system should take up communication to farmers rather than developers

promoting it. 3) Seed companies should also invest resources in commercialization and propagation material and contact farmers for GM (Genetically Modified) crops. Technology cannot be stopped from reaching the needy.

Dr. K. Ramasamy in his inaugural address, said that there is a lot of confusion on the biotechnological and biosafety issues of GM crops. There is extensive research underway and knowledge of biosafety issues needs to be strengthened. There are 68 crore youth less than 30 years of age in India who are to be given a road map for Agriculture development. In Western countries STEAM ((Science, Technology, Engineering, Agriculture and Mathematics) is recommended for students but in India it is only STEM, which will give a global recognition for our younger generation. Policy makers with knowledge on Biotechnology should be involved in revising the curriculum. India tops production in 10 crops and second in 27 crops, which cannot be sustained without improved technologies. Scientists should come forward to explain the technology to public.

Earlier, Dr. R. Gnanam, Director of the Center for Plant Molecular Biology and Biotechnology, TNAU, Coimbatore welcomed the gathering. Finally, Dr. S. Mohankumar, Professor and Head, Department of Plant Biotechnology proposed a vote of thanks.

Eminent scientists and heads of organizations delivered lectures during the technical session followed by discussion on the topics to disseminate the science and safety aspects of GM crops. The workshop was attended by over 120 participants, ranging from state agricultural deputy-directors, researchers from universities and central institutes, progressive farmers and research students.

Public Relations Officer