



BORLAUG FELLOW FACILITATES SEMINAR ON GM CROPS

Former Borlaug Fellow and Seed Science Center visiting scientist V. L. Maheshwari recently organized a national seminar for the discussion of the issues and approaches needed for the adoption of GM crops in India. The seminar titled “Genetically Modified Crops: Status, Issues, and Awareness,” was held at the North Maharashtra University (NMU) campus in Jalgaon, India, in January.

According to Jeff Wolt, Iowa State professor of agronomy and BIGMAP faculty member, the campus of NMU was a significant venue for a seminar of this type. “The adoption of GMO products is of particular importance in India right now,” said Wolt. “The rapid adoption and success of GM cotton in the area is moving the country towards the approval of GMO food crops.”

Currently India ranks fifth in the world in biotech crop cultivation. However, cotton is the only biotech crop that has been approved for use. Biotech food crops have yet to be adopted.

Maheshwari is Director of the School of Life Sciences at NMU. As part of the Norman E. Borlaug International Science and Technology Program, Maheshwari worked with Wolt as a visiting scientist in the Seed Science Center at Iowa State in the spring of 2008. The two scientists researched biosafety regulations for GM crops in India and under Codex.

Maheshwari invited Wolt and Sule Karaman, research scientist for DuPont

Left: Former Borlaug Fellow and Seed Science Center visiting scientist V.L. Maheshwari addresses attendees at a seminar that he organized in January 2009 to discuss the adoption of GM crops in India.

Agriculture and Nutrition in Johnston, Iowa, and former BIGMAP policy associate to speak at the symposium. Wolt discussed risk and safety analysis approaches to GM crops with emphasis on quantitative risk assessment applications. Karaman focused on the topic of toxicological principles as they apply to the safety assessment of GM crops.

Keynote speaker at the event was C.D. Mayee. He discussed the status and importance of genetically modified crops as a development need for India. Mayee is Chairman of the Agricultural Scientist’s Recruitment Board of the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) and Vice Chairman of the Genetic Engineering Approval Committee (GEAC) which serves as the lead Indian regulatory body on GM crops.

Other issues addressed at the seminar included the status of agricultural biotechnology in India and the regulatory standards, experimental characterization, and safety evaluation of GM crops.

Approximately 300 individuals, including scientists and NMU graduate students, attended the event.



Above: BIGMAP faculty member Jeff Wolt (left) answers questions about risk and safety analysis approaches to GM crops from scientists at North Maharashtra University in Jalgaon, India.