

CONFEDERATION OF BEE KEEPING INDUSTRY.

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PRESS RELEASE

HONEY INDUSTRY PROTESTS GOVERNMENT'S PUSH FOR GM MUSTARD: LAKHS OF LIVELIHOODS AT STAKE, POINT OUT BEE KEEPERS & HONEY EXPORTERS

New Delhi, September 26, 2016

Proposal of Introducing GM mustard in India has created severe apprehensions and the stakeholders in the honey industry are planning a protest to register their opposition to commercial cultivation of GM mustard on September 28th 2016 in the Capital's Jantar Mantar.

Announcing the protest at Jantar Mantar, representatives of bee keepers' associations, from states of U P, Rajasthan, Punjab, Haryana, M P, Bihar, West Bengal J&K, Maharastra, H.P. along with exporters, **Shri Subhash Kambhoj and Shri Ram Kishor Yadav** said that it would be unwise for the government to approve GM mustard since it would have a direct adverse impact on mustard production itself, when bees are adversely impacted. "It is not just the honey industry but the production of mustard crop as well as various other food crops in the region that will be impacted", they stated. They appealed to state governments to intervene immediately and stop approval for its cultivation

Shri Dev Vrat Sharma told that India's honey industry has at least 5 lakh bee keepers families and has nearly one million livelihoods and enterprises at stake in direct and indirect ways. We produce around 90,000 metric tonnes of honey in India, out of which around 35,000 metric tonnes are exported, with an estimated value of 750 crore rupees. It is important to note that 50-60% of the total production of honey in India is Mustard Honey. Mustard, therefore, is a very important crop for the industry. Any permission to GM mustard will jeopardise this sector seriously".

Dr I S hooda pointed out that bee-keeping is being beaten back with numerous new developments and that it is important that the government takes decisions based on medium and long term vision of sustainability. "After the advent of Bt cotton, bee keepers lost a whole crop that used to exist for them for honey production during Kharif. First it was a reduction in honey and later of the bees themselves. We urge the government to first investigate the impacts of Bt cotton on our enterprise and ascertain for itself the rapid negative changes that have come about. It is important that our most important crop, mustard, is not affected by transgenic mustard being brought in, in the name of increasing yields", he said.

Shri Yogeshwar Singh told that it was important to note that bio-safety data and the tests that were conducted to assess the safety and agronomic outcome of GM mustard are not being shared and there no transparency in this respect. “We would like our experts and ICAR to examine the data carefully to see if the tests done are adequate or not and if the results have been interpreted correctly. But for that to happen, ***the government has to share the entire bio-safety dossier in the public domain.*** It also has to give the citizens and various stakeholders at least 120 days time in which to study the available information and provide own analysis.

The farmers and the beekeepers are going to gather in Jantar Mantar on September 28th 2016 in large numbers to impress upon the government that pushing GM mustard on the farmers is an unscientific and anti-farmer anti-beekeeping industry. Sri Y Singh also told that existing evidence shows that this GM mustard was not even tested properly to see if herbicide tolerant of this crop will leave its impacts on honeybees. However, there is evidence from other scientific studies that it will indeed have adverse effects.

In such a case, we are talking about not just bee keepers’ profitability but on mustard growers themselves, whose yields are improved by at least 40% by bees and also about impacts on entire eco-systems and our food production aided by honeybees. ***Instead of bringing GM Crops and adding to the farm-input cost, promotion and organization of beekeeping in the country will make us self sufficient in oilseeds and pulses.***

The spokespersons who interacted with the media pointed out that their memorandum to the government went unaddressed they are forced to resort to lodging their concerns and objections by assembling at Jantar Mantar on September 28th 2016 starting at 11am .

On behalf of Confederation of Beekeeping Industry

Subhash Kamboj (9355665520)

Yogeshwar Singh (9359933807)

Devvrat sharma (9868119855)

Pushpendra S. Bhandari (9982628636)

Dr. I.S.Hooda (9313814268)