

Lower Yields And Chemical Agro-poisons: What Is The Point Of GM Mustard In India? Money Spinner for Bayer-Monsanto

By [Colin Todhunter](#)

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Region: [Asia](#)

Theme: [Biotechnology and GMO](#)

In-depth Report: [Climate Change](#)

The decision whether to allow the commercialisation of the first genetically modified (GM) food crop (mustard) in India rumbles on. As I have previously discussed [here](#), the bottom line is government collusion over GM crop technology (that is [not wanted and not needed](#)) with transnational agribusiness, which is trying to hide in the background.

The real story behind GM mustard in India is that it presents the opportunity to make various herbicide tolerant (HT) mustard hybrids using India's best germ plasm, which would be an irresistible money spinner for the developers and chemical manufacturers (Bayer-Monsanto). GM mustard is both a [Trojan horse and based on a hoax](#).

Various high-level reports (listed [here](#)) have advised against introducing GM food crops to India. Allowing for not one but three GMOs (which is what the GM mustard in question constitutes, when we include its two crucial GM parental lines) is according to campaigner Aruna Rodrigues a serious case of regulatory 'sleight-of-hand', permissible due to diluted rules to ensure easy compliance.

If allowed to go through, India will be forced to accept a highly toxic and unsustainable technology suited to monocropping. HT GM crops would be particularly unsuitable for its agriculture given the large number of small farms [growing a diverse range of crops alongside mustard](#) that contribute towards [agricultural biodiversity and, in turn, diverse, healthy diets](#).

The processes being used to push through GM mustard are, according to [this writ](#) by Rodrigues, based on fraud and unremitting regulatory delinquency. She argues that the whole system is in addition being protected by a subterranean process of regulation that has also broken India's constitutional safeguards by keeping the biosafety data hidden from the nation.

Rodrigues says, "These matters require criminal prosecution."

New development

The government has now told the Supreme Court (SC) that it won't release GM mustard without the court's say so. At the same time, however, it strongly opposes the writ filed by Rodrigues.

In an affidavit response to Aruna Rodrigues' writ, however, the Union of India revealed something that merited a press release from the civil organisation Navdanya and Aruna Rodrigues (presented in full below this article).

According to the press statement, the government's response contained an admission by the Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee (GEAC) itself that no claim had been made in any documents submitted to it that HT Mustard DMH 11 out-performs non-GMO hybrids.

So then, what is the point of GM mustard? And what were all the claims being made in media about GM mustard outperforming non-GMO hybrids by 25-30% in yield?

According to the press statement, that claim was also made by the developers (Dr Pental and his team at Delhi University) and is clearly recorded by the media. It also notes that the claim of superior yield was implied in the Supreme Court (SC) during a 'hearing' (24 October) on India's import bill for edible oil.

The press statement says:

"It is now clear, by the GEAC's own admission, that DMH 11 does not out-yield India's best non-GMO cultivars and this includes hybrids against which this mustard was not tested."

Navdanya and Aruna Rodrigues ask:

"Therefore, what is the Union of India's point? Is this HT mustard being introduced because of its ability to just make hybrids? Given that it does not outperform our non-GMO hybrids, the argument collapses on its essential lack of science and reasoned thinking."

They conclude that this HT Mustard DMH 11 is not needed – which is in fact the first step of a risk assessment protocol for GM crops!

HT mustard DMH 11 will make no impact on the domestic production of mustard oil, which was a major reason why it was being pushed in the first place. The argument was that GM mustard would increase productivity and this would help reduce imports of edible oils. Implicit in this was that India's farmers were unproductive and GM would help overcome this.

While it is clear that India's imports of edible oils have indeed increased, this is not as a result of an underperforming home-grown sector. India essentially became a [dumping ground](#) for palm oil. Until the mid-1990s, India was virtually self-sufficient in edible oils. Then import tariffs were reduced, leading to an influx of cheap (subsidised) edible oil imports that domestic farmers could not compete with.

This was a deliberate policy that effectively devastated the home-grown edible oils sector and served the interests of palm oil growers and US grain and agriculture commodity company [Cargill](#), which helped write international trade rules to secure access to the Indian market on its terms. It therefore came as little surprise that in 2013 India's then Agriculture Minister Sharad Pawar accused US companies of derailing the nation's oil seeds production programme.

Supporters of GM twisted this situation to call for the introduction of GM mustard to increase productivity.

Now their arguments on virtually each and every count have been shown to be erroneous and constitute little more than a cynical ruse to facilitate Bayer-Monsanto GM food crops and associated agropoisons entry into India.

PRESS RELEASE

UNION OF INDIA REPLY AFFIDAVIT 20/21 OCT 2016

GEAC STATES: "NO CLAIM MADE THAT DMH 11 OUTPERFORMS NON-GMO HYBRIDS"

"No such claim has been made in any of the submitted documents that DMH 11 out-performs Non-GMO hybrids. The comparison has only been made between hybrid DMH 11, NC (national Check) Varuna and the appropriate zonal checks — MSY of 2670 Kg/ha has been recorded over three years of BRL trials which is 28% and 37% more than the NC & ZC respectively". (Ref. U of India Reply Pg 55 point 86-88)

Petitioner Comment:

With this statement, the Union of India effectively buries its own 'raison d'être' for its HT Mustard DMH 11. The following points may be noted:

(a) The claim of a 25-30% increase in yield may not have technically been made in the SC. This adherence to a technicality is mischievous to the extreme, but much more moot is that the Regulators by this argument cut the grass from under their own feet.

The above yield is indeed the claim by the Developers, clearly recorded by the Media and strangely in the SC by implication, by bringing in the issue of our import bill for edible oil in the 'Hearing' of the 24th. The claim is:

- That the superior yield of this HT mustard DMH 11, (that despite there being NO TRAIT for YIELD in the Barnase-Barstar system with the Bar gene glufosinate), through its HYBRID-MAKING capability is superior to Non-GMO cultivars in the Country.

(b) The Petitioners' have proven without doubt based on RTI data that DMH 11 field trials were fraudulent, and specifically on the question of DELIBERATELY poor-yielding Comparators used in the field testing of HT Mustard DMH 11 in the BRL I & II field trials .

NOTE: By this statement the Government concedes the argument that DMH 11 does not out-yield India's best NON-GMO cultivars and this includes HYBRIDS against which this mustard was not tested in BRL I & II trials (2010-11 onwards).

Therefore, what is the Union-of India's point? Is this HT mustard being introduced because of its ability to JUST make HYBRIDS? Given that it does not outperform our Non-GMO hybrids, the argument collapses on its essential lack of science and reasoned thinking.

CONCLUSION

- This HT Mustard DMH 11 is NOT NEEDED (the first step of a risk assessment protocol for GM crops)

AND

- This HT mustard DMH 11 will make no impact on DOMESTIC production of Mustard Oil leave alone the import oil bill of which mustard and Rape together are less than 2% of the total oil import (of 14.3 million Metric Tonnes in 2015-16)

Aruna Rodrigues: Petitioner GMO PIL Mo: 098263 96033

Indra Shekhar Singh, Media Spokesperson, Navdanya

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