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India still debating GM crops

Although it had been cleared by a government committee, India is still weighing up the pros and cons of GM produce



The Indian government will hold further discussions on the issue of genetically modified (GM) eggplants, despite the vegetable being given environmental clearance by the country's Genetic Engineering Approval Committee (GEAC).

The decision comes in the wake of reservations expressed from many quarters about the safety of the transgenic crop, known as 'Bt' eggplant.

The report which formed

the basis of the committee's decision to approve the crop was made available on the website of the environment ministry for comments until 31 December.

Throughout January and February the Indian environment ministry is holding a series of meetings with experts on the topic, Food and Beverage News reported.

Environmental groups have been opposed to Bt eggplants, saying there are enough indigenously developed eggplant varieties to warrant pressing ahead with the scheme without fully investigating the health impacts on humans.

Though the GEAC has cleared the crop, Bt eggplant is not likely to be available for commercial cultivation before the end of 2010 and it requires clearance from three government ministries - environment and forest, agriculture, and health & family welfare.