

INDIAN MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT HEEDS PUBLIC CALL FOR A MORATORIUM ON BT BRINJAL

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Since the mid-2000s Big Agribusiness had been pushing for the introduction of Bt Brinjal in Bangladesh and India concurrently. It was approved for commercialization in India in 2009, but - after public outcry and rounds of debates, a moratorium on Bt Brinjal was passed by the Indian government in February 2010. Introducing a ban that is in place until today. On the other hand, Bt brinjal was approved for commercial release in Bangladesh in 2013¹.



In February 2010, after nearly a month of public hearings, protests, and nationwide debate², India's Environment Minister Jairam Ramesh announced an indefinite moratorium on the sale of Bt Brinjal (genetically modified eggplant). Cleared for commercialisation in October 2009 by India's Genetic

Engineering Approval Committee (GEAC), Bt Brinjal has been met with tremendous resistance by farmers, consumer advocacy groups, medical experts, and environmentalists. A number of state governments, which in India's federal system have the final say on agriculture, had also expressed apprehension about the product.

The moratorium on Bt Brinjal in India was a milestone in the global movement for GMO-free agriculture.

Dr Vandana Shiva has likened India's struggle for GMO-free agriculture to Mahatma Gandhi's movement for independence. "Opposing Bt Brinjal is as much a fight for our food as it is our freedom. When the British Raj imposed the salt law to establish a salt monopoly, Gandhi started the Salt Satyagraha. When corporations like Monsanto impose GMOs to establish seed monopoly and control our food, we are forced to declare a Seed Satyagraha. GMO-free, biodiverse, organic agriculture is the satyagraha of our times."

¹ Choudhary B et al 2014. The Status of Commercialized Bt Brinjal in Bangladesh. ISAAA Brief No. 47. Ithaca NY

² "CEE - India Environment Portal | News, Reports, Documents, Blogs, Data, Analysis on Environment & Development | India, South Asia."
<http://www.indiaenvironmentportal.org.in/category/3947/thesaurus/cee/?page=4>