

# Critiques to the new draft BRAI bill

Based on the new Biotechnology Regulatory Authority of India (BRAI) bill, listed below are a few critiques.

- The bill falls flat in terms of its capacity as a regulator because of the very fact that it seems more like a promoter than a regulator. It explicitly says in its introduction that it is for promoting safe use of Modern Biotechnology and to set up a regulatory body for that. Given that there is a strong body of evidence on the health, environmental and socio economic impacts of genetically modified crops there should be a regulation to ensure biosafety than to promote the use of modern biotechnology. This is not surprising as the bill is being tabled and championed by the Ministry of Science and technology that has the mandate to promote GM crops.
- As feared, the formed authority is a centralised body sitting under the ministry of science and technology with one chairperson, 2 full time members and 2 part time members, none of whom come from any socio-economic background which is dangerous as the impacts from GM crops are also socio-economic.
- The current bill, like its predecessor, overrides the RTI act 2005 when it comes to biosafety information on GM crops provided by the GM crop developer. This combination of a promoter sitting as regulator and denying information to public, on things as essential as biosafety information, is a recipe for an autocratic- non transparent single window clearance for GM crops.
- The State governments have been kept out of any decision making role even though agriculture is a state subject. This is going to override the role that the State Governments were finally awarded recently by the existing regulatory body in deciding on Field trials in their respective states. The state Biotechnology advisory committee, a role created in this body is once again being put under the Department of Biotechnology of respective states furthering the conflict of interest issue.
- There is no long term biosafety studies being put in place nor is an independent body doing it. The promoters are allowed to do the biosafety study, a case of fox guarding the chicken coop.
- Last but not the least, the bill also opens up the regulatory body to private sector intervention by permitting four private sector members in the Biotechnology advisory committee which is supposed to advise the biotech regulator on all matters related to regulatory mechanism.

## Contact for comments and information:

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