

# G:net

A Bimonthly Newsletter, June-July 2002, No. 5

## THE GOBAR TIMES ENVIRONMENT EDUCATORS' NETWORK



RUSTAM VANIA

### INSIDE G:NET

News and Views

Educator pages  
on Genetic  
Modification

Photocopiable  
student worksheets

## GMOs - boon or bane?

Genetic engineering has bypassed the natural process of reproduction. Today scientists have created new life forms - Genetically modified organisms or Living modified organisms - through artificial induction of genetic traits or characteristics. These inserted genes may be from a different variety of the organism or even culled from totally unrelated species.

Genetic engineers also call them transgenic organisms - transfer of genes from one life form to another. This technology thus gives the ability to add, subtract, alter or exchange an individual gene or a group of genes, which are known to influence an individual characteristic. As science now has the ability to tamper with these genetic codes, this movement of genes between species is of great concern to scientists and environmentalists.

Will it be beneficial for the environment as a whole or will it create a laboratory imp causing havoc wherever let loose? Or are genetically modified organisms the magical equation to solve the world problems of food, nutrition, diseases? Will scientists be able to develop genetically modified plants that are not affected by severe hot or cold

temperatures? Are GMOs causing unnecessary panic just like vaccination did years ago?

The green revolution brought bountiful of food to all. But in lieu the enormous increase in pesticide took its toll on the health of people and on the soil. Will genetic modification have the same results? Have we run out of our traditional knowledge to better our harvest?

Global Biotech research is controlled by 15 major corporations out of which 13 are in North America. They are privately owned organisations. Are these biotech firms trying to create another East India Company, a conglomerate to rule the world? Will they play down the risks their product is associated with? Are they capable of handling the genie they create? There are many more questions that need to be explored.

In this issue of G:NET, we examine the world of Genetically Modified Organisms. What are these? How do they affect us? Do we really need them? Are they to invade our land and consequently will our farmers forget their indigenous ways of producing their own seeds. Will the marginalised farmer benefit or are GMOs a death knell for them?

*The Environment Education Team, CSE*



Centre for Science and Environment is a New Delhi based non-profit research organisation involved in disseminating information, promoting awareness and generating public opinion on issues of environment, governance, science, technology and sustainable development.

[www.cseindia.org](http://www.cseindia.org)