

Body formed to create awareness about agriculture biotechnology

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CropLife Pakistan (CLP) has formed a 'Biotech Committee' to create more awareness about agricultural biotechnology in Pakistan. This Committee for year 2013 would be chaired by Monsanto, while DuPont Pioneer and Syngenta are the members. This announcement was made by CropLife Pakistan's senior members Farooq Shahid, Sajjad Chatha and Nadeem Austin at a Press conference on Thursday.

Monsanto Pakistan's Country Lead Aamir Mahmood Mirza and Regulatory Affairs Lead Muhammad Asim were also present on the occasion. CropLife Pakistan established in 1968 is working to promote sustainable agriculture through the process of research, development, manufacture and sale of new, innovative and safe products and services in the areas of Plant Biotechnology, seeds and crop protection products.

Farooq Shahid said working of the Biotech Committee will be governed by policies and procedures of CropLife International, a global federation representing the plant science industry, and CropLife Pakistan representing national and multinational companies of plant science industry.

He said achieving sustainability in food grain production and food security continues to be a challenge in the developing world including Pakistan. Biotechnology is a tool available to improve food security problem and reducing poverty. The application of biotechnology by Pakistani farmers would not only result in enhancing productivity but would also help in addressing food security challenges faced by the country. At a time when nations all across the world are multiplying their agriculture productivity, preventing disease prevalence and solving the problem of environmental pollution, Pakistan needs a national strategy and plan of action to use this revolutionary science for solving, preventing problems and for rapid development, he added. Biotech crops can increase productivity and income significantly, and hence, can serve as an engine of rural economic growth that can contribute to the alleviation of poverty for the small and resource-poor farmers, he claimed.

'The Biotech Committee would therefore engage the biotech regulatory agencies for implementation of Biosafety Guidelines and Rules 2005 so that science-based, level playing field and transparent regulatory processes are implemented in Pakistan. It would create and enhance acceptance of biotechnology by closely working with regulators, scientists, farmers, media, industry, academics and civil society. It would also act as a key promoter of safe and sustainable use of plant biotechnology and as industry focal point and immediate contact on matters pertaining to agricultural biotechnology,' Farooq Shahid said.

The major activities to be undertaken by Biotech Committee include understanding and identifying biotech regulatory needs of the country and engage with regulators to ensure that these become part of the regulatory framework. It will also participate and articulate the benefits of modern bio-technology in agriculture on various public and academic platforms.

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