

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY
LOK SABHA**

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:2013
ANSWERED ON:04.03.2003
EFFORTS TO SAVE BANANAS FROM EXTINCTION
CHADA SURESH REDDY

Will the Minister of SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

- (a) whether it is a fact that Bananas, may face extinction within 10 years on account of pests and diseases; and
- (b) if so, the genetic engineering efforts proposed to save bananas from going extinct?

Answer

THE MINISTER OF STATE FOR SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (SHRI BACHI SINGH RAWAT)

(a) & (b) As per the report in an international journal, New Scientist (January, 2003), a leading researcher has stated that Banana could be wiped out by two diseases, namely, Panama disease and Black Sigatoka, that have struck Africa, South America and Asia. However the reports by American Phytopathological Society (APS) and UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) state that banana is not on the verge of extinction since it is unlikely that these diseases will prove fatal. These diseases can be controlled through use of fungicides and pesticides. In addition, use of germplasm of greater genetic diversity for plantation and developing genetically engineered disease resistant plants will also help in tackling this problem. Studies on genetic engineering and genomics are underway in many research laboratories in India and abroad.

So far, there is no risk of extinction of Banana in India because bananas are cultivated under polyclonal system, whereas it is grown as monoclonal system in Latin America and Caribbean countries. India harbours a wide range of banana varieties; some of which constitute a valuable gene pool which can be used to develop resistance to major pests and diseases for use in developing improved varieties.