

Title: Need to conduct a comprehensive independent reassessment of performance of Bt. Cotton.

SHRI E. PONNUSWAMY (CHIDAMBARAM): Sir, on November 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup>, 2002, an 'Expert Team', the Genetic Engineering Approval Committee (GEAC) from MOEF visited farmers' fields in Andhra Pradesh to assess the performance of Bt. Cotton. Based on their report, the Minister of Environment and Forests had stated that Bt. Cotton had shown 'satisfactory performance.'

But a team from Greenpeace, Sarvodaya Youth Organisation and Centre for Resource Education visited five of the farmers' fields that were earlier visited by the expert team on 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> of January, 2003. After visiting the fields and speaking to the farmers, they found that the study itself was flawed as the sample size was extremely small. The scope of the study was too narrow leaving out important socio-economic parameters and the timing of the study was wrong.

As such, a comprehensive and scientific independent reassessment of the performance of Bt. Cotton be conducted, and before any further approval of Bt. Cotton or any other GE crop, a broad-based system of monitoring and evaluation must be instituted with the participation of civil society groups and farmers to avoid the consequences of such expensive mistakes.