

Agribiotech stands ignored in India: Dr Usha Zehr

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New Delhi: In her talk at the 6th Foundation Day event of the Biotechnology Industry Research Assistance Council (BIRAC), Dr Usha Barwale Zehr, Director and Chief Technology Officer, Maharashtra Hybrid Seeds Company Private Limited (MAHYCO) stated that the agriculture biotechnology in India is not among the priority areas for policymakers in India.

“The Bt Brinjal example shows that we are ignoring the science. While the India shelved it, Bangladesh has successfully been growing it. The market in India for the product is roughly Rs 2000 crore,” Dr Zehr said.

“There is a pressure from the board that the investments into genetically modified (GM) crops

should be reconsidered. It will be a loss for the country if we don't achieve the best levels in these technologies," she added.

Calling for a better clarity on the usage of modern technologies in agriculture in India, Dr Zehr said that there should be a better clarity for use of gene editing and other modern technologies. "If an innovator invests time and money and the product gets delayed due to want of approvals, it is unfortunate. Shouldn't happen as it demoralizes the industry."

Advising the startups, she said that the market demand for the product is much important than the technology itself. "Time to market has considerably decreased now by 2-3 years. Sequencing has become cheaper. So, these are good factors for the technologists to get the product ready in lesser times," she said.