

Anwar for harmless GM crops

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THE country has to welcome biotechnology as well as GMO technology in food production apart from hybrid system against the population growth by 1.48 per cent and decreasing cultivable lands by 1 per cent every year.

The agriculture minister, MK Anwar, disclosed this at a workshop saying that the first task of the government is to ensure harmlessness of the technology to the environment and health through research on different genetically modified organism (GMO) crops.

The minister was inaugurating a 2-day workshop on the 'Intellectual Property Rights, Technology Transfer and Socio-Economic Impact Assessment of Genetically Modified Crops' as chief guest with Dr Nurul Alam, executive chairman of BARC, in the chair.

With the perspective of mobilising ideas and understanding the tech-transfer policies in some of the renowned scientific laboratories, the Bangladesh Agricultural Research Council (BARC) and the Agricultural

Biotechnology Support Project II (ABSPII) have jointly organised the workshop in the city.

No nation can refrain research on the modified food crops with the apprehension of its adverse effect, said the minister.

Anwar, however, said that the country is yet to produce any GM food, though it has already imported some items like soybean oil.

Among others, Dr Frank A Shotkoski, director of the Agricultural Biotechnology Support Project II (ABSPII), Cornell University, D Abdur Razzaque, member director (Crops), BARC and K Vijayaraghavan, regional coordinator (South Asia) of ABSPII, spoke on the occasion.

According to MK Anwar, the food grain, mainly rice and wheat, production was only about 10 million tonnes in 1970, which increased to about 27 million tonnes in 2004.

Production of other crops, although could not reach at a desirable level, is in the increasing trend.

He said, the country needed to grow an additional five to six million tonnes of food grain by 2020, as by that time country's

projected population would be around 173 million.

Challenges of increased food production can be met through the improvement of present available technologies and intensification of crop production in marginal land.

Many good technologies have not yet reached to the farmers, he said adding that the conventional agricultural technologies alone cannot meet the future challenges, said the minister.

To enhance productivity and value addition to agricultural produce, biotechnology is a modern tool. He also suggested developing efficient institution technology transfer mechanism and Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) policies here.

Countries that protect intellectual property - copyright, patents, trademarks and other forms of intangible property - provide an incentive for capital investment in research and aid to the ability to develop new products.

The global community will need to adjust policies in regard to IPR, to comply with recent changes with the adoption of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT).