**POLITICAL MANIFESTO DEMAND WITH REGARD TO GMOs/LMOs**

## (Genetically Modified Organisms or Crops/ Living Modified Organisms)

*GMO contamination of our seeds, our foundation seed stock, will change the structure of our food at the molecular level. Any harm or toxicity that there is will remain, without the possibility of remediation or reversibility.*

## WE PLEDGE THAT WE WILL:

**In order to protect our farming and our food from irreversible GMO/LMO contamination:**

1. **IMPOSE an INDEFINITE MORATORIUM on the environmental release of GMOs/LMOs (crops/ trees/insects/animals/fish amongst others), including GMO/LMO trials, pending independent and rigorous biosafety risk assessment & regulation as unanimously recommended by the Supreme Court- appointed TEC (Technical Expert Committee) and two PSCs of 2012 and 2016**
2. **INTRODUCE a Biosafety Protection Act, which prioritises India’s biosafety and biodiversity; that implements the moratorium on GMOs/LMOs within India, the import of any GMOs/LMOs into India including as seeds or as food, primary or secondary with an appropriate labelling law for zero GMO content**
3. **BAN the herbicides glyphosate and glufosinate**
4. **HOLD national consultations and a Parliamentary debate to formulate policy on the means to establish & incentivise AGRO-ECOLOGICAL systems of farming in India AS THE MEANS TO AVOID ECOSYSTEMS COLLAPSE\***
5. **NOT ALLOW patents on GMO seeds/plants, which is India’s fundamental position. We pledge that farmers’ traditional knowledge and inherent seed freedom will remain secure**

**BACKGROUND TO GMOs IN INDIA**

**Bt Cotton:** 16 years after its commercialisation in India in 2002, **Hybrid Bt cotton** has failed ‘*on the ground’*, i.e. it is not a sustainable crop because the target pest (the pink bollworm), is now resistant to Bt cotton in South, West and Central India. This was predicted from the beginning by leading insect scien- tists. The fallout is that insecticide use has increased 37% by 2016 as compared to the pre-Bt era in 2002, a fact that demolishes the reason for its introduction. Performance Yield /hectare has therefore, also fallen after an initial spurt, and has levelled off at 450-500 kg/hectare. Other performance parameters show higher fertiliser use, crop failures leading to signif- icant increases in farmer costs and consequently, farmers have started making huge losses. Hybrid Bt

cotton seeds are several times more expensive than non-Bt seeds/varieties. Hybrid Bt cotton seeds can- not be saved and reused and the strategy has served as a *‘value capture’* mechanism for Monsanto.

**Herbicide Tolerant (HT) GM Cotton & HT Crops:** HT (GM) Cotton is engineered to be resistant to Mon- santo’s herbicide, **Glyphosate.** It is being cultivated illegally in various parts of the country on commer- cial scale with tacit support from the Regulators. Herbicides are used to kill weeds, but in India, a land of mixed farming, it also kills all plants (with- out the trait), ie companion crops and grasses (used for fodder), and poisons the farming environment and water bodies. HT crops are particularly unsuit- ed to India, which is why the Supreme Court’s TEC

recommended a BAN on HT crops. The Swaminathan Committee also found no justification for HT crops. 25 years of experience with commercialised HT (GM) crops in the USA and Argentina point definitively to their unsustainability with the exponential rise of su- perweeds, rising farmer costs and no yield gain with HT (GM) crops. Glyphosate is also the herbicide cat- egorised by the IARC (International Agency for Re- search on Cancer, of the WHO), as “*a probable hu- man carcinogen”*, which is its second highest hazard rating. There are 9,000 cases in the US courts linking glyphosate to Non-Hodgkin’s lymphoma /other can- cers. Its use has already been restricted or banned by some State Governments in India and several coun- tries. Glyphosate, it may be noted, is legally allowed to be used ONLY in tea crops and uncultivated areas.

**HT (GM) HYBRID Mustard:** The Regulators have vir- tually approved the commercialisation of HT hybrid mustard and will try again to plant this GM crop this winter (of 2019), after failing to do so in this just-fin- ished winter season. HT Hybrid mustard is out-yield- ed by its Non-GMO counterparts, a fact admitted by the Union of India in the Supreme Court, which therefore, negates its very purpose. It is being used as the backdoor entry for other GM HT crops, there- by- opening-up Indian agriculture to another dan- gerous GMO and yet another technical fix, which will harm Indian agriculture as described above. HT (GM) hybrid mustard has been genetically modified to be resistant to **Glufosinate,** a herbicide more toxic than Glyphosate with serious adverse health impacts. HT (GM) mustard will irreversibly contaminate India’s rich genetic diversity in mustard and destroy de- cades of breeding and research with Non-GMO vari- eties and hybrids, which out yield HT GM mustard . We have over 5000 Accessions of the wider mustard family in our gene banks, which will be contaminated if HT GM mustard is released. Many States in India have already rejected permission to plant GM HT mustard.

**GM Imports as Seed & Food:** India has been import- ing and illegally, GM seeds/suspected GM seeds in hundreds of tonnes. The regulators have also allowed GMO food and GMO content in food, which is also il- legal. Given furthermore, the manifesto demands for a GMO-free status for India, such imports in future must be barred with rigour and the requisite testing facilities set up at entry points to enforce the ban. The consequences of GM soybean seeds being im- ported and cultivated illegally are extremely serious

for India’s non GMO soy cultivation for two reasons. The first is that we are possibly the only country in the world that is able to provide exclusivity; Indian soy can only be Non-GMO because we have no GM soy approved for cultivation. We risk this status and our soy agriculture by being so cavalier about the culti- vation of illegal GM Soy. Over time, unless rigorously stopped, India’s Non-GMO soybean will be irrevers- ibly contaminated. The second is that the EU, the Far East and other countries require Non-GMO soy for animal feed. As happened with GM contamination in organic cotton a few years ago, we also risk our ex- ports to lucrative Non-GMO markets. In fact the evi- dence of contamination of Non-GM crops even from GM crop field trials, is much too serious now and an immediate moratorium must be imposed in India on such trials, in line with the recommendations of the Supreme Court-appointed Technical Expert Commit- tee. It is particularly worrisome that the Indian Reg- ulators are now planning to reintroduce **Bt brinjal,** without any rationale or justification. Bt brinjal is under an indefinite Central Government moratorium because the *‘self-assessed’* biosafety dossier of Mon- santo-Mahyco was severely flawed with little over- sight by our regulators. It would seem that we lack rudimentary self-respect as there is an official move to look to Bangladesh and the release of Bt brinjal in that Country to justify a ruse to back its release in In- dia. Bangladesh is a country with even weaker GMO regulation and enforcement than India.

The FSSAI is planning to allow lax labelling standards for GMO content in food (ie allowing a GMO thresh- old of up to 1% GMO presence in food, without la- belling), thereby exposing Indians to health risks and denying informed choice. Our GMO policy means that India must have a labelling law for zero GMO content and set up laboratories to international stan- dards that can routinely test for GMO presence to a level of detection’ (LOD) of 0.01%. As technology improvements allow, India must move to test to even lower LODs.

**Organic / Agro-ecological Farming**: In the final anal- yses, it is proven that there can be no co-existence between GM and Non-GM crops. And Non-GM crops will be contaminated irreparably& irreversibly. There- fore, Indian organic farming will be eliminated; yet, as consumer demand for non-chemical and organic products/food rise, (it is the fastest growing segment in the world), and the toxicity of chemicals in farming and food is clearly now recognised to be destroying

our health and environment, India must do the smart thing. OUR GOVERNMENT MUST SERIOUSLY INCEN-

TIVISE OUR FARMERS on a war footing to EMPLOY AGRO-ECOLOGICAL SYSTEMS OF FARMING. Tradi-

tional breeding methods outperform GMOs hands down. India has a natural competitive advantage in its organic small-holder farming systems, a historical gift of knowledge to our Nation. We must upgrade, modernise and financially reward our farmers. And this is our opportunity: to push our advantage and take firm control to become the world’s leading sup- plier, by volume and value, of quality organic prod- ucts, most especially food. We must also protect our rich heritage in Ayurveda/Unnani systems of medi- cine and their ‘jari-booti’ (herbs). GMOs will elimi- nate in perpetuity, organic standards and Non-GMO crops in Indian agri.

**Climate Change, Eco-Systems Collapse & Agro-ecol- ogy**: The just released global scientific review\* (February 2019), reveals that greatly plummeting in- sects’ numbers may lead to extinction of 40% of the insect population over the next few decades, threat- ening a global collapse of ecosystems. The main driv- ers include industrial scale, intensive agriculture and the reliance on pesticides and fertilisers. Further- more, it is now also known that agro-ecological sys- tems of farming with agro-forestry, will help the very urgent work required in 2°C pathways, to sequester carbon by natural means, by removing CO2 from the atmosphere, a key objective to mitigate climate change. GMOs on the other hand, as also evident from the Bt cotton experience in India, encourage ‘industrial agriculture’, and chemical farming. They are not an option.

# WE MUST CHANGE THE WAY WE GROW OUR FOOD AND VERY QUICKLY

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Signed:

## Bhartiya Kisan Union (BKU) Alliance for Sustainable and Holistic Agriculture

**(ASHA) - Kisan Swaraj**

**Manohar Parchure: Organic Farmer & Promoter**

**Kavitha Kuruganti: Co-Convenor, Coalition for a GM Free India**

## Dr. Vandana Shiva

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**Lead Petitioner: Supreme Court GMO PIL**

**With Co-signatories:**

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