



KAMARAJ IAS ACADEMY
Only IAS Academy by Grandson of "Perunthalaivar Kamarajar"

What are GM crops and why they are a point of concern in US trade deal?

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What Are GM Crops?

GM (Genetically Modified) crops are plants whose DNA has been changed using genetic engineering to give them specific traits, like resisting pests or tolerating weed-killers.

Examples of traits include pest resistance, herbicide tolerance, and improved nutrition.

Common GM crops globally include soybean, maize (corn), cotton, and canola.

Why GM Crops Are in Focus in the Trade Deal

The India-US trade deal has revived debate on GM crops because some US agricultural products dominate global supply chains with GM variants.

Products such as soybean oil, dried distillers' grains (DDGS), and sorghum draw attention because they may be linked to GM crops in the US.

India's Position on GM Crop Imports

India remains cautious about GM crop imports under the deal. It has not allowed most GM food crop imports and has strict regulations on them.

The **only GM crop allowed for cultivation** in India so far has been **Bt cotton**.

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India's concern is that **allowing GM products** could **affect food safety, biodiversity, and export markets that prefer GM-free products.**

Why This Matters to Farmers

Farmer groups and industry bodies fear that importing GM-linked products, even as animal feed, could hurt local growers of crops like soybean and maize.

They argue that such imports could put pressure on domestic prices and reduce the demand for locally grown crops.

There are also broader worries that GM imports might weaken India's "non-GM" export advantage in markets such as the EU, where many buyers prefer non-GM products.

Trade Deal's Limits on GM Items

So far, under the interim trade framework, India has avoided opening its market to major GM crops like corn and soybeans.

The focus is mostly on limited imports like animal feed by-products (e.g., DDGS) and soybean oil, but these are subject to quotas and duty controls.

Sensitive staples such as rice, wheat, dairy, poultry, and sugar have been kept out of trade concessions to protect farmers.

Why This Is Important

The issue of GM crops in a trade deal is significant because it affects food security, farmer incomes, and export competitiveness.

It also highlights policy differences between countries that widely use GM technology (like the US) and those that are cautious about it (like India).

Way Forward

Follow science-based safety rules for GM crop decisions.

Protect farmers' income and prices before allowing imports.

Ensure clear GM food labeling for consumer choice.

Allow only limited, monitored imports where necessary.

Promote Indian biotech research for resilient crops.

Balance trade growth with food security and biodiversity.