

News Details

FICCI steps in to help keep biotech norms in tune with global trends

Apr 21, 2004

NEW DELHI, Apr. 18: With the government deciding to review constraints faced by the biotechnology industry, and deciding to draw up new rules replacing Rules 1989 of the Environmental Protection Act, 1986, that will comply with the Cartagena Protocol, Ficci has submitted its recommendations to the ministry of environment and forests.

Among the suggestions made are changes in the risk categories as defined in the annexures to the rules, changes to the title and clearer definitino of the term genetechonology.

Sources say that the government is under pressure from international agencies to ensure that environmental protection laws are in compliance with the Convention on Biodiversity and the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety. It is in this context that the government met with industry representatives, as it wanted to capitalise on the view of the industry while formulating the new guidelines.

In a letter to the Environment Secretary, Ficci has made extensive suggestions. To begin with, it would like the risk categories defined in the annexures of the rules to be reworked. Ficci has suggested that micro-organisms under category 1 be exempt from regulations.

The micro-organisms in this category meet 95% of the requirements of the pharma industry. On the other hand, Ficci has asked for stringent regulations to govern categories 2 and 3. It has also suggested that a task force comprising scientists and scientists-turned-entrepreneurs be consituted.

This would be responsible for redrafting the rules, keeping in view the requirements of protecting the environment, nature, plant, animal and human health, while promoting/facilitating the safe use of living modified organisms (LMOs) and enhancing productivity. It has also suggested that the redrafted rules be discussed with industry bodies like Ficci, All India Biotech Association and other such organisations.

Among the other submissions made by Ficci is the inclusion of a biotechnology industry representative on the genetic engineering approval committee (GEAC). Ficci has suggested that he may be included as a non-voting member of the committee. It has also called for greater interministerial co-ordination.

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