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Genetically Engineered Crops in Developing Countries

Edited by Drs. DVR Reddy, P Ananda Kumar, P Lava Kumar, G Loebenstein and C Kameswara Rao, 2015, Studium Press LLC, USA, pp. 1-405 (Price: US \$ 74.95)

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“The crux of the problems crop GE faces today lies in the almost of total absence of public education. It is not just the general public that need to be educated, but all stakeholders, including most scientists, regulators, policy makers, bureaucracy, judiciary and more importantly the media. The activists, often in collusion with the media have used this lapse to the hilt and hijacked the agenda. The present volume with several reviews on diverse issues, hopefully remedies this situation at least partially and so is most welcome”.

The last paragraph of the Foreword by Dr. C S Prakash in this book summarizes an important issue which developers of transgenic crops are aware of but do not know how to tackle. I read the book hoping to get some new insights and arguments that could be used to convince the ‘nay-sayers’. The text fell short of this expectation.

The book is a compilation of extensive information on various aspects of genetically engineered (GE) crops in the context of developing countries. It will be very helpful for scientists working in this area as a ready reckoner of various facts. The book can be divided into two parts:

(i) Chapters which deal with broader issues, like socio-economic impact [Chapters 1, 2 & 4], regulations of GEs [Chapters 2 and 3], decade of Bt. cotton in India [Chapter 5]

(ii) Chapters which are more like reviews or current status of transgenic crops being developed for resistance to pathogens [Chapter 6 & 7] herbicides [Chapter 8], viruses [Chapters 9, 10 & 11], and for nutritional enhancements [Chapter 12]. There is also a chapter on status of agricultural biotechnology in Ghana [Chapter 13].

A lot of data (a good percentage sourced from compilation of Clive James) and references have been brought together. However, I found many of the chapters to be lacking in the author's own interpretations of the scenario and take home lessons. One of the chapters that comes close to these expectations is that by Dr. Kameshwara Rao on issues confronting development, biosecurity, regulation and deployment of GE crops. There is also a lack of connectivity between the chapters.

In summary, the expectations of Dr. C S Prakash, who wrote the foreword for the book, is lost amidst a lot of facts and figures.

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