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#### Report Highlights:

\*Bt brinjal in deep freeze\*, \*Sharad Pawar urges scientists to remove all misgivings regarding GM crops\*, \*Government paying special attention to enhance availability of pulses\*, \*NDBB may be asked to import skimmed milk power, butter oil to meet shortage\*.

#### General Information:

Welcome to Hot Bites from India, a weekly summary of issues of interest to the U. S. agricultural community. The report includes information that has been garnered during travel within India, reported in the local media, or offered by host country officials and agricultural analysts. Press articles are included and summarized in this report. Significant issues will be expanded upon in subsequent reports from this office. Minor grammatical changes have been made for clarification.

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### **Bt BRINJAL IN DEEP FREEZE**

The moratorium on Bt brinjal could last seven to eight years. The Supreme Court's independent nominee to the Genetic Engineering Approval Committee (GEAC) said that building independent laboratories alone will take about five years. GEAC had approved commercialization of Bt brinjal in October 2009. However, questions were raised about conflict of interest within GEAC and the scientific soundness of the approval process. On setting up an independent regulatory body as proposed by Environment and Forests Minister, Jairam Ramesh, Bhargava (well-known biologist and past vice-chairman of National Knowledge Commission) expressed apprehensions over the structure of the National Biotechnology Regulatory Authority and a National Biotechnology Regulatory Bill, 2008, as proposed by the Department of Biotechnology. (Source: Business Standard, 02/17/10)

### **SHARAD PAWAR URGES SCIENTISTS TO REMOVE ALL MISGIVINGS REGARDING GM CROPS**

The Minister of Agriculture, Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution Mr. Sharad Pawar has urged agricultural scientists to double their efforts to remove all misgivings regarding GM crops from the minds of policy makers and public. Inaugurating the two-day conference of Vice Chancellors of Agricultural Universities and meeting of Directors of ICAR here today, Mr. Pawar said, 'the recent decision on Bt brinjal should not be seen as a setback to our efforts, but a challenge which we need to surmount.' He said, 'conventional technologies of agriculture are inadequate to meet the formidable challenges. The most compelling case for bio-technology and more specifically transgenic crops is their capability to increase crop productivity, lower production costs, conserving bio-diversity, efficient use of external inputs, and improvement of economic and social benefits and alleviation of abject poverty in poor and developing countries.' (Source: PIB, 02/17/10)

### **GOVERNMENT PAYING SPECIAL ATTENTION TO ENHANCE AVAILABILITY OF PULSES**

In view of the gap between production and demand for pulses, a number of steps have been taken by the government to enhance availability of pulses in the country. Government is paying special attention to enhance production as well as import of pulses. Public Sector undertakings such as STC, MMTC, PEC, and Nafed have been importing pulses since 2006 with an assurance from the government to reimburse up to 15 percent of landed cost. In November 2008, the government also introduced a program for providing pulses at a subsidy of rs. 10 per kg for

distribution through the public distribution system (PDS). A total quantity of 400,000 tons of pulses was earmarked for this purpose. Apart from financial incentives, the GOI has also been proactive in keeping contact with countries which export major quantities to India. To encourage private sector, pulse imports are permitted duty-free. A campaign for popularization of yellow peas was undertaken in Delhi in collaboration with NAFED, NCCF, Mother Dairy, and Kendriya Bhandar. These organizations are supplying yellow peas from their outlets in Delhi and National Capital Region at Rs. 26 per kg. Pulses are one of the major components of the government's National Food Security Mission, which operates in 171 districts across 17 states in the country where pulse productivity is low. (Source: Press Information Bureau, 02/16/10)

### **NDDB MAY BE ASKED TO IMPORT SKIMMED MILK POWDER, BUTTER OIL TO MEET SHORTAGE**

India, the world's largest producer of milk, is looking to allow import of skimmed milk powder and butter oil to address the rising shortage of milk and milk products, which has led to a sharp increase in prices. A committee of secretaries on prices is expected to take up the proposal shortly. As per the proposal, the National Dairy Development Board (NDDB) may be asked to import 30,000 mt of skimmed milk powder and 15,000 mt of anhydrous butter oil on an urgent basis. India produces about 105 mt of milk every year, roughly of the same order as the domestic demand. The tightly balanced demand-supply equation has caused demand to exceed supply, following the drought-related drop in production of milk. There is also apprehension that government policies have made cattle rearing for meat more lucrative, causing growth in production of milk to drop in recent years. Prices of milk have already gone up in the range of Rs 4 a liter and ghee or butter oil by about 5 percent in the past six months due to shortage of the commodity. Milk cooperatives all over the country are expected to further raise prices in wake of shortfall and higher procurement prices. (Source: Economic Times, 02/18/10)

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<b>REPORT #</b>	<b>SUBJECT</b>	<b>DATE SUBMITTED</b>
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IN1011	Grain and Feed: ANNUAL	02/17/2010

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