India’s Genetically Modified Crop Area Fifth largest in the World

The International Service for the Acquisition of Agri-Biotech Applications’(ISAAA) latest ‘Global Status of Commercialized Biotech/GM Crops in 2017’ report shows farmers across the world to have planted 189.8 million hectares (mh) under transgenic crops.

- The report has estimated the highest share in the world’s total crop area for 2017 to be of soyabean, followed by maize, cotton, canola, alfalfa and sugar-beet.
- The GM traits in these crops included both insect-resistance and tolerance for application of herbicide.

India

- India has the world’s fifth largest cultivated area under genetically modified crops, at 11.4 mh in 2017.
- Unlike other big growers, its entire GM crop area is under a single crop – cotton – incorporating genes from the Bacillus thuringiensis or BT soil bacterium to resist Heliothis bollworm insect pests.
- In India, the GM crops under regulatory consideration – apart from the already commercialized BT Cotton – include glyphosate tolerant cotton and hybrid mustard.
- Though both have undergone all the mandated bio-safety research and open field trials, their commercial release has been delayed due to opposition from environmental activists.

Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee

- The Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee (GEAC) functions in the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC).
- It is responsible for the appraisal of activities involving large-scale use of hazardous microorganisms and recombinants in research and industrial production from the environmental angle.
- The committee is also responsible for the appraisal of proposals relating to the release of genetically engineered (GE) organisms and products into the environment including experimental field trials.
- GEAC is chaired by the Special Secretary/Additional Secretary of MoEF&CC and co-chaired by a representative from the Department of Biotechnology (DBT).