



Motion-compensated algorithms in Mokey software, help post-production artists to quickly change advertisements even on a bus

# GMOs : to opt or not to opt

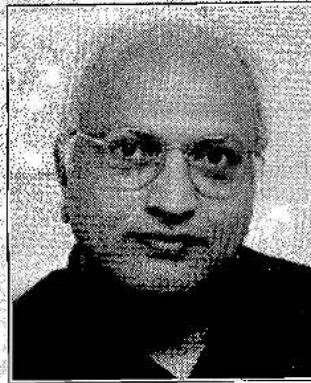
Scientists must communicate to the masses - in the language that they understand, the benefits of the bio-technology. Regulatory policies need to get more transparent if apprehensions about GMOs are to be cleared

They've now turned from debate to the 'only' talk of the town - the GMO's (Genetically modified organisms) - be it genetically redesigned food crops or vaccines. Even as the patrons of biotechnology - industry and academia included, are trying their best to convince the general public about the benefits of the technology; and farmers rights activists, NGO's and so many others, are attempting to drive home the threats of 'an alien invasion into agriculture, one wonders whether the debate is worth the time? or is 'talking about something you don't know', a fancy that the world has taken to?

While on the lookout for answers, Deccan Herald met Dr.Sivramiah "Shanthu" Shantharam, President of Biologistics International. Formerly, Regulatory Compliance Manager at Plant Sciences Division, Syngenta Basel, Switzerland, he was responsible for developing public affairs and communications strategies for two important biotechnology projects viz. Golden Rice and Rice Genome Sequence Data Projects. Prior to joining Syngenta, Shanthu was employed with the US Department Agriculture's Biotechnology Regulatory Program in

## GMO debate

Does that mean that the debate itself is uncalled for? "Debate is a must. When in doubt it is important that clarifications are sought. How else can one be convinced whether what is being



Dr Shanthu Shantharam

There's nothing wrong in seeking fair and equitable protection for intellectual property. If we can do it for physical property why not for intellectual?

given to them is good or bad or ugly? What is first needed is an understanding of GMOs are. What kind of technology is being applied for their creation? And, whether in the true sense they cause the kind of harm that are alleged to? To do that one needs to communicate well. First, the developers of the technology - the scientists, need to reach out to the public and tell them what they are doing. Second, the regulatory policies need to get more transparent. Regulatory bodies must look at the issue in a more open-minded fashion and communicate the same to the public. The root of most apprehensions lies probably in the fact that Biotechnology is industry-driven and industry is profit-driven. When the industry invests so much of its expertise and money to do good to the public, it has to keep in mind the returns.

That's natural. That should not be a cause for concern. What becomes concern is when profit-making turns into profiteering. If the Industry is just trying to push its products without testing for safety standards or without enough field trials, it needs to be monitored. Whether they like it or not, everybody has to go through all the norms before they get approval for any product. Yes, in case there has been a cut in the time frame for field trial or any such thing, its because the product has already proved its worth before trial time." "Assuming that the Industry is actually forcing its stuff into the market, history is evidence to the fact that be it food products or drugs or any other product of utility - bad stuff is automatically rejected by the consumers. The simple fact that such rejections have not happened to any GMO proves that they are quality products."

IPR issues