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Genetically Modified Crops Can Ensure Food Security

Bangladesh can step up its efforts in achieving food security and maintaining ecological balance by adopting Genetically Modified (GM) crop varieties in agriculture sector, an eminent biologist told a meeting here yesterday.

Dr Rafiqul Islam Khan, a Bangladeshi cell and molecular biologist and a staff scientist of an US biotechnology organisation, said 16 countries, including the United States, Canada, Australia, Germany, France, China and South Africa so far adopted genetically modified crops to increase food productions.

He was making a presentation on `crop genetic engineering and food security` at a meeting organised by Syngenta Bangladesh at its conference room.

Highlighting the prospect of genetically modified crops, Rafiqul Islam Khan said the genetic engineering has the potential to develop crops that can grow in difficult conditions like flood, draught and saline soil.

Besides, he said loss of crop from insect and disease could be minimised by adopting genetically modified crops as the plants of the varieties are resistant to insects and diseases.

``The crop varieties are also environment-friendly as farmers do not require pesticides for their cultivation,`` Rafiqul Islam said.

He said Bangladesh could adopt the latest technology to grow rice, wheat, maize, banana, papaya, pineapple, tomato and some other vegetables.

Referring to the growing trend of using genetic technology in agriculture, the scientist said genetically modified crops were commercially grown in 1996 in 4.2 million acres of land in USA and some other countries. The area has been increased to 109.2 million acres, which is 19 per cent of the total 670 million acres of land under cultivation in the world, he added.

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