

Public Perception of Genetically Engineered Brinjal and Modern Biotechnology in Bangladesh

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Abstract

Bangladesh is the first country in South Asia where the genetically engineered Bt brinjal has been approved for cultivation in 2013. Alongside, there are ongoing developments for crop improvement through modern biotechnology. As the products are intended for consumers, their understanding of the technologies should be taken into consideration. To demonstrate this, a survey of 1000 people was conducted to assess their attitudes toward Bt brinjal and modern biotechnology. The demographic factors in the study were age, gender, education, and occupation. The questionnaire focused on knowledge about Bt brinjal, understanding of the technology and its future prospects, consumption of Bt brinjal, impact of Bt brinjal in the market, and the requirement of crop improvement through modern biotechnology. More than half of the respondents were aware of the term 'Bt brinjal', but many of them were unclear about the mechanism. Most of the respondents think that Bt brinjal is safe and will be popular in the market alongside other crops. Many respondents think that Bt brinjal may reduce the popularity of native brinjal. However, while asked about preference in buying, the respondents are more comfortable to buy native brinjal than the Bt brinjal. It has been observed that people with science background are more aware and positive towards the technology, while people with limited education and non-science backgrounds possess different knowledge. However, the respondents are eager to see the technology used for the improvement of other crops. The majority of respondents believed that modern biotechnology could improve rice and potatoes. It was evident from the study that people are open to the technology, but they should be properly communicated with the science and evidence.

Key words: Bt brinjal, Modern biotechnology, Public perception