Concerns with Pro-GM Lobby

What is the issue?

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The Pro-Gm lobby is pushing for a weak regulatory system for the quick introduction of GM foods in the market.

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What is the status of GM products in India?

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- In recent times many products were not labelled as “GM” and failed to comply with the Legal Metrology (Packaged Commodities) Rules, 2011.
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- In addition, they violated the norms set by the director general of foreign trade to declare imported GM products at the ports.
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- All in all, these products are being sold in the Indian market illegally.
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What are the measures taken in introspecting GM products?

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- Centre for Science and Environment (CSE) started monitoring the GM products usage and impacts and they release various reports in this regard.
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- In India import of GM foods is subject to approval by relevant authorities and has labelling requirements as well.
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- All the products that found to be GM-positive had not been approved by the Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee (GEAC) or the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI).
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What are the issues with government’s measures?

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- In 2016 the responsibility of approving and regulating sales and import of GM-processed foods was transferred from GEAC to the FSSAI.
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- As GEAC has relinquished its authority and the FSSAI is yet to enact its rules and procedures, there is no authority in India to look after the regulation of GM-processed food.
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- The FSSAI’s proposed GM labelling laws are weak and will dilute the labelling provisions of the Legal Metrology (Packaged Commodities) Rules.
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How MNC’s lobby over GM products?

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- Companies with contrary viewpoints or commercial interests have casted aspersions on the scientific study by questioning the methodology of the government on GM.
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- They claim that their products are so ‘complex’ that they could not be tested in an Indian laboratory.
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- The pro-GM lobby thinks that regulations are stopping the growth of GM foods and that they would like regulations to be relaxed further.
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- Pro- GM groups advocates that GM food is safe and even though there might be a violation of the law, GM foods are not a health risk.
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- But there is still a question mark on the safety of GM food as there has not been any long-term study.
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- The pro-GM lobby want weak regulatory systems for quick introduction of GM food in the market.
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- They do not want labelling of GM food and they want society to accept GM

food without an explanation of the pros and cons.
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What measures needs to be taken?

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- The parliamentary standing committee on science and technology and environment and forests, studied the impact of GM and quoted that there is an absence of a long-term scientific study on unintended health impacts of GM foods in the Indian context.
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- The report mentioned that the authorities are relying solely on studies that were not done on the Indian population and climate.
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- It is to be understood that growth in biotechnology must be accompanied with a scientifically rigorous process that establishes its safety for human health and the environment.
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- In addition, there must be a strong regulatory mechanism to assess safety and prevent and control unintended consequences.
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Source: Financial Express

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