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Supermarkets Flooded with Foreign GM Foods Despite Ban

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Recently, researchers from Centre for Science and Environment (CSE) randomly tested 65 food samples in Gujarat, Punjab and Delhi-NCR and they have found that 32 per cent were GM positive.

Under the Section 22 of the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006, GM foods are not allowed to be manufactured, imported or sold in India unless approved under the Act.

Key Findings

- Out of 65 food samples, 30 were manufactured in India; of these, 17 per cent, were GM positive.
- Among the 35 imported samples- manufactured in Canada, the UAE, the US, the Netherlands and Thailand — 46 per cent, were GM positive.
- Domestically manufactured cottonseed oil samples tested GM positive, but no GM positive packaged oil sample mentioned GM ingredients on its label. But since India allows cultivation of only genetically modified BT cotton, the cottonseed oil extracted from it will be GM positive, too.

Implications of Poor Enforcement

- Most GM foods in the study did not disclose GM on their labels and 15 per cent made false claims saying they were GM-free.
- A consumer should be able to make an informed choice.
- Two of the eight infant food samples, imported from the US and the Netherlands, were GM positive, but the labels did not disclose this.

Note:

- **Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs) and GM Foods**
 - GMOs can be defined as organisms (i.e. plants, animals or microorganisms) in which the genetic material (DNA) has been altered in a way that does not occur naturally by mating and/or natural recombination.
 - The technology is called “recombinant DNA technology” or “genetic engineering”.
 - It allows selected individual genes to be transferred from one organism into another and also between nonrelated species.
 - Foods produced from or using GM organisms are referred to as GM foods.
- **Why GM Foods are Produced?**
 - GM foods are supposed to have a lower price and greater durability and/or nutritional value.
 - GM crops are aimed at providing an increased level of crop protection by introducing resistance against plant diseases caused by insects or viruses and from herbicides.