

India conserves germplasm of local rice varieties

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AHMEDABAD : India's National Bureau of Plant Genetic Resources (NBPGR) on Thursday said germplasm of over 20,000 indigenous varieties of rice has been conserved in the country for its use by future generations and to avert it from becoming extinct.

Speaking to reporters here, noted biotechnologist Dr Swapan K Dutta said, "Over 20,000 indigenous varieties of Indian rice and other food grains have been conserved under Crop Germplasm Conservation at the gene banks".

"These gene banks have been established world over with a view to preserve these indigenous varieties of crops as in recent times some of these varieties have shown acceleration in loss of the genetic diversity because of their increasing susceptibility to diseases, pests and environmental stresses." He added.

These gene banks are providing plant breeders with the genetic resources necessary for developing more resistant crops that would enable farmers to maintain high yields, Dr Dutta said.

Most of these gene banks now store the germplasm of only the major crops such as cereals, potatoes, and grain legumes. Cultivated varieties of these crops are conserved as well as wild species that might otherwise become extinct, he said.

Besides this, genetically modified varieties of food grains, which are aimed at yielding more production of food to meet the demand-supply gap particularly in developing countries, would be on display at the 7th International Genetically Modified Seeds Conference to be held in New Delhi later this year, Dutta added.