

India opens way for edible genetically modified crop

Indian regulators have for the first time approved the introduction of a genetically modified food crop for human consumption by giving the nod to a pest-resistant aubergine, **writes James Lamont in New Delhi.** The BT Brinjal, as it is called, was developed by Mahyco, one of India's largest seed producers, and Monsanto, a US agricultural company. The transgenic vegetable carries a special gene that makes it poisonous to pests and reduces need for pesticides.

India, where agriculture contributes 20 per cent of gross domestic product, has allowed genetically modified cotton to be grown as a commercial crop. But the genetic engineering approval committee has never before given the nod to a food crop in a country where opposition to meddling with food science is fierce. The trials conducted on the BT Brinjal have faced criticism.

The aubergine awaits cabinet approval as safe to eat before it can go into commercial production.

