

India's BT cotton revolution



In seven years India has become the second largest producer and exporter of cotton. Amidst the challenges in agriculture, India's Bt cotton success story stands out even in the controversy over Bt and GM crops. By cultivating Bt cotton, Mr. Gurtej Singh, from Ghragna, Punjab constructed a new home costing Rs. 20 lakh, purchased one acre (he already owns 16 acres), invested in an education policy for his son and bought a new car. Also Mr. Nandkishore Raut, from Bhambraja village, Yavatmal, Maharashtra, purchased 2 acres land (already owns 6 acres), built a new pucca home, and took a life insurance policy worth Rs. 1.75 lakh for his son, benefited by this Bt cotton. Similarly Mr. Botla Kumara Swamy, Sivaji Nagar village, Warangal, Andhra Pradesh, cultivates Bt cotton in four acres. He constructed a home costing Rs. 1.5 lakh, bought a second-hand motorcycle for Rs. 20,000, and installed a pipeline for irrigation. In addition he started a small milk collection-cum-analysis business and earns approximately Rs. 15,000 a month.

Higher living standards

Families of Bt cotton seed farmers in India enjoy a higher standard of living such as purchasing cars, motorcycles, building pucca and larger houses, enrolling their children in English medium schools, or sending them abroad for education, investing in agricultural land, and farm equipment such as tractors and drip irrigation. As farmers upgrade to newer technologies, it is becoming evident that they are experiencing immense value from insect-protected Bt cotton which also provides higher yields, ease of farming convenience, in addition to better insect resistance management. Within seven years of its introduction of Bt cotton (2002-08), it made India the world's second largest producer and exporter of cotton (ahead of U.S. and China).

Yield details

On an average, Bt cotton seeds provided cotton farmers with yields of 700 - 900 kg. per acre vs. 300-400 kg. per acre with conventional seeds. Indian farmers are astute determinants of value. Farmers determine value based on quality of yield, fair price, and convenience. Mr. Jagresh said that a farmer higher good quality cotton yields, better returns (fair market price), and more convenience when farming – and he is

likely to adopt a new product Within eight years of introduction, India's cotton farmers have adopted bt cotton seeds on approx. 90 per cent or over 192 lakh of India's total 225 lakh cotton acres. He explains that while in the first five years of 2002-06, farmers adopted the first-generation single- gene insect-protected bt cotton seeds on 39 per cent of India's total cotton acres (87 lakh acres in 2006 vs. 72,000 acres in 2002); since then, farmers have been upgrading to the second-generation double-gene insect-protected Bollgard II bt cotton seeds over the next four years of 2006-2009 at a much faster pace.

Major market

India is the world's most competitive cotton seed market. The introduction of bt cotton technology re-catalyzed cotton seed research in India and farmers now choose from 350+ insect-protected Bt cotton hybrid seed varieties offered by 30 plus Indian seed companies with six bt cotton technologies.

New technologies

Rapid increase in the number of farmers and acreages cultivating Bt cotton seeds is testament to Indian farmer's faith and trust in this technology, and their willingness to embrace new technologies, adds Mr. Jagresh. Whatever the controversy over Bt brinjal, Bt cotton remains a major success story in India.

For more information- Contact the farmers: Mr. Gurtej Singh, Ghragna, Punjab, mob: 9872104955, Mr. Nandkishore Raut, Yavatmal, Maharashtra, mob: 9881378484, Mr. Botla Kumara Swamy, Shivaji Nagar village, Warangal, Andhra Pradesh, mob: 9642260356.

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