

GM technology an aid in the 'long, hard fight' against Texas boll weevil

The boll weevil eradication program in Texas, combined with the use of genetically modified cotton varieties, has resulted in a \$2.3 billion dollar advantage for the cotton industry. Texas farmers have also been able to reduce the number of pesticide applications they make and to increase yields by 30 percent.

It's been a "long, hard fight" against the boll weevil, says Dr. Charles Allen, Texas AgriLife Extension specialist and coordinator of Integrated Pest Management.

However, farmers are now more reliant on GM varieties and more vulnerable, Allen says. He is concerned about the insects developing a resistance to the GM cotton, as well as the introduction of invasive pests. Many of these are brought in as a result of "globalization of agriculture," possibly through the South Texas ports.

"We have to be farming at a very high level," he says. "We must have a sense of urgency; we can't just sit back and think we will be OK. Agriculture must take command."

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