

Looking at the hard evidence on GM cotton and farmer suicide in India

Most of the cotton grown in India comes from GM seeds, referred to as Bt cotton having had the addition of genes from the *Bacillus thuringiensis* bacterium, which provides resistance to cotton bollworm. Even so, India has banned the use of GM food crops, notably aubergine, partly from the belief that the rate of suicide among farmers has increased in cotton-growing states since Bt cotton was introduced in 2002.

This belief was espoused by Prince Charles in 2008 and more recently by the controversial environmental campaigner Vandana Shiva. Anti-GM campaigns point to the costs of seeds and the fact that a crop failure can ruin farmers who then turn to suicide.

The evidence indicates that GM farming does not lead to higher suicide rates. In six out of the nine cotton-growing states, the suicide rate for males who did not work on farms was higher than for farmers. Also in 2001 (before Bt cotton was introduced) the suicide rate was 31.7 per 100,000 and in 2011 the corresponding estimate was 29.3 – only a minor difference.

Read the full original article: [Hard Evidence: does GM cotton lead to farmer suicide in India?](#)