

Interactive Map: Bangladesh farmers' dramatic success with pesticide-reducing Bt brinjal

The partners of Bangladesh's Bt brinjal project, the first GMO food crop grown in South Asia, recently [published](#) an interactive map displaying pictures and field reports from participating farmers' fields. The interactive map provides on-the-ground videos, photos and interviews of the farmers growing Bt brinjal in the first season.

Earlier this year, a controversy [erupted](#) over the Bt brinjal project when an article in Bangladesh newspaper *Financial Express* claimed that the Bt brinjal crops are failing. The claims have since been refuted by Cornell University professor Tony Shelton and environmental activist Mark Lynas' site visits to the Bt brinjal fields. The interactive map's on-the-ground reports also show that most of the Bt brinjal crops have done well.

"One of the aims of the interactive map is to combat scare stories and conspiracy theories with full and transparent information about the project," [said](#) Frank Shotkoski, director of the Agricultural Biotechnology Support Project (ABSP II) at Cornell University, which is acting as a partner with the Bangladesh Agricultural Research Institute (BARI) in developing Bt brinjal.

Click on the blue pins for more information. Map locations are approximate to protect the farmers' privacy. View [Bt brinjal interactive map of farmers](#) in a larger map

Bt brinjal is developed jointly by Indian seed company Mahyco, BARI and Cornell University, with BARI retaining the intellectual property rights in the public sector. The brinjal is genetically engineered to resist the fruit and shoot borer, a major brinjal pest which is normally controlled by the heavy use of toxic pesticides. The insect-resistant brinjal is still susceptible to other challenges like bacterial wilt infection, and BARI researchers are working to address those challenges.

The brinjal was approved for planting by the Bangladeshi government in October 2013. Twenty farmers from four districts – Gazipur, Jamalpur, Pabna and Rangpur – were selected to be the first to plant Bt brinjal. The interactive map was produced after numerous field visits to the farmers by BARI and Cornell University staff members.

"I met with eight of the 20 Bt brinjal farmers during my visits to Bangladesh in May and July," said Shotkoski. "None of them voiced dissatisfaction with the new Bt eggplant. Each farmer assured me that they had every intention of continuing to grow the crop during the dry season when bacterial wilt is less of a problem for them." The farmers are encouraged to save their Bt brinjal seed, and the seed is also available royalty-free in perpetuity.

Additional Resources:

- [Bt eggplant farmers in Bangladesh target of anti-GMO "green" groups](#), Guardian

- [Bt brinjal could enter India from Bangladesh illegally despite moratorium](#), Economic Times
- [Cornell researcher confirms Bangladesh Bt eggplant farms free of pest damage](#), Bt Brinjal