

Inside look at growing Bt cotton with Indian farmer

Is Bt cotton good or bad? But this type of question might confuse matters more than illuminate them. A better question might be — what problems does it solve, what problems does it create? How does it interact with customs and practices in India?

Prakash Puppalwar farms in Yavatmal district in the Vidarbha region. It is known as 'Cotton City' because of its traditional ties to the growing and manufacture of cotton goods. He has an ancestral cotton farming background. He is one of a group of farmers that got an education in agriculture and came back to their village to farm so he has a good understanding of best practices, and also a handle on the problems that smaller, less educated farmers may face.

You seem to have some practical problems. Why do people blame only Bt cotton?

I don't want to speculate on their reasons. With Bt cotton we have got freedom from an old enemy — the pests. We have surety. Even the lady farm workers know that with Bt cotton we have higher production. We have gone from four to 10 quintals. I don't understand why the whole blame should go on the seeds. The seeds are a small part of our cost. Out of our total cost of growing, 65 percent goes towards labor. Then there is fertilization, irrigation, marketing. The seeds are only 5 percent of our cost. Why would we blame the seeds? There are a lot of factors that go towards a crop succeeding or failing. You might have great production but if you can't sell it at a good rate you would have a failed crop anyway. This year we have had only 33 percent rain that we expected so far. Smaller farms who don't have irrigation could be wiped out. Those who have irrigation will be fine. That is a very important factor.

Read the full, original article: [Talking to a Vidarbha Bt cotton farmer](#)