

## Interview: Vandana Shiva responds to New Yorker profile

Correspondent Federico Rampini interviews Vandana Shiva for the Italian newspaper Repubblica, in the wake of [the controversy](#) surrounding the [profile of her in the New Yorker](#):

**The New Yorker charges: your campaign ignores that Bt cotton (with *Bacillus thuringiensis*) has improved the conditions of Indian farmers, reduced the use of pesticides and therefore illness for the farmers. Furthermore, the epidemic suicides that you expose would be false: the percentage among Indian farmers that cultivate GMOs would be less than in other social categories.**

“Specter did not carry out an actual reconnaissance on the field, he did not go to the cotton region of Maharashtra. Otherwise he would have known about Shankar Raut and Tatyarji Varlu, of the Varud village. They committed suicide after the disaster of the Bt cotton harvest. And there are many cases like these. The argument that farmers commit suicide for debts and not for the GMOs is deceptive. The agents of Monsanto who sell GMO seeds, fertilizers and pesticides are the same who make credit. The farmer first makes debts for the cotton seeds and then discovers that he has to purchase more fertilizer and pesticide and makes even more debts. The cotton germ loses its strength and so the doses of fertilizer and pesticides increase as well as the debts. This cycle has high costs, an escalation in the chemical products used which becomes a debt trap that pushes towards suicide”.

**The *New Yorker* questions your statement according to which Monsanto’s patents prevent the farmers from saving the seeds. A law on the rights of the farmers, approved in 2001, safeguards their right to save and use the seeds again. And, according to the article, the costs decrease and the harvests are richer.**

“Before Monsanto came on the scene, the local cotton seeds cost between 5 to 10 rupees a kilo. The monopoly built by Monsanto has made the prices rise to 3,555 rupees a kilo of which 1,200 are royalties. Where Monsanto has had to reduce its prices, such as in Andhra Pradesh, this happened thanks to the pressure we put on the local antitrust authorities. The law of 2001 also is not an incident. I was among those appointed as an expert by the Ministry of Agriculture. But the battle is never-ending. At this moment Pepsi Cola is penetrating in the school canteen business in India. There is no balanced diet but only an American junk-food giant that wants to decide what Indian children should eat. Our food sovereignty is in danger. Behind the ideological campaigns like this article published on the New Yorker we can see another purpose. Monsanto wants to conquer Africa. Therefore it is spreading the legend that their GMOs have made Indian farmers rich.”

**Read full, original article: [Vandana Shiva: “I’m a pain in the neck for the GMO industry. They want to discredit me, but I will continue to fight”](#).**