

Scientists say blaming Bt cotton for Indian farmer suicides is unreasonable

Farmer suicides in Maharashtra's Vidarbha area and other parts of the country have nothing to do with Bt cotton, scientists said at the Indian Science Congress here on Monday.

"There is a lot of negative public perception about Bt crops... Even a paper in *Nature* says linking these two [Bt. Cotton and farmer suicides] is our imagination," said Dr. Anupam Verma, INSA [Indian National Science Academy] Senior Scientist at the Indian Agriculture Research Institute, speaking on 'GM crops — use of modern technology in agriculture.'

Some scientists said there were interesting research prospects in the field of biotechnology. "We could be extracting oil from leaves, instead of seeds. Imagine what it would mean for us, when our government is spending over Rs. 60,000 crore on oil import," Dr. Deepak Pental, former Vice-Chancellor of the Delhi University, said. "We can produce oil indigenously if we use Bt. But unfortunately, it is caught up in a debate taken up by the Left and now supported by the neo-right." Pental is an award-winning genetic scientist who has been credited with major breakthroughs in hybrid seed science.

In the recent past, there had been a sharp increase in the acreage of GM crops in the country, and over 90 percent of the cotton cultivated was GM crop, scientists said. They refuted arguments about monopolisation and said there were over 1000 Bt Cotton hybrids available in the country. Verma referred to Project Sunshine in Gujarat and explained how Bt Cotton had powered the growth in agriculture in Gujarat. He said GM Maize had taken nutrition to Adivasi farmers.

Read full, original article: [Bt cotton not to blame for farm distress: scientists](#)