

Indian farmers say GM cotton reduces pesticide use, improves yields

The debate over genetically modified crops rears its head every now and then, but for many farmers, it is an open-and-shut case.

Take the example of Basavaraj F Rudagi and Kallanagouda Patil, of Saunshi and Uppinabetegere villages in Dharwad respectively. Basavaraj grows cotton on 15 acres of the 40 acres he owns, while Kallanagouda grows the crop on 10 acres. Both of them say Bt cotton has almost doubled their yield, increased their earnings and reduced the investment on pesticides and labour.

According to experts, debates on GM crops are often riddled with ill-informed remarks about the risks of such crops. Genetic modification is a technology that cannot be ignored and may come handy to feed the 9 billion people expected to populate the planet by 2050, they say.

“Earlier, farmers growing traditional cotton had to spray pesticide 10 to 15 times during the peak growth period of cotton to control bollworm infection. Now, with Bt cotton, pesticide sprays have come down by 70 percent, to just three to four rounds,” Basavaraj says.

Kallanagouda says non-Bt growers used to get a yield of four to five quintals, which is a low return. “With Bt cotton seeds, we are actually investing less on pesticides and labour and getting a yield of eight to 10 quintals,” he says.

He puts the rise in earnings at 50-60 percent, and adds with happiness that today, 90 per cent of the cotton generated in India is from Bt seeds.

Read full, original article: [Farmers Enumerate Benefits of Bt Cotton](#)