

## India to sell Bt cotton, dramatically dropping seed costs

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The government's decision to allow the Central Institute of Cotton Research (CICR) to market domestically developed straight line varieties of BT cotton could bring down the seed cost of cotton farmers sharply.

The Indian varieties of BT cotton will be available at just Rs150 per kilogram compared to the Rs2,000 per kilogram cost of BT cotton seeds manufactured under license from US-based biotechnology firm Monsanto.

Wardha-based farm right activist Vijay Jawandhia, whose correspondence with Prime Minister Narendra Modi prompted the agriculture ministry to look into the patent on Mon 531 gene, said the patent in the US had ended in 2012. Since then other countries like Pakistan had developed 31 new varieties of BT cotton and made it available to farmers.

States like Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and Karnataka have reported high incidence of farmer suicides since the cultivation cost of BT cotton is high and the losses incurred on account of a crop failure are tough to absorb for small farmers.

Some of this could get addressed if the cost of cotton seeds comes down through domestically developed varieties.

"We along with 11 agricultural universities in India have developed 21 varieties of Indian BT cotton and we are gearing ourselves to take these varieties to farmers by 2017," said Keshav Kranti, director of the Nagpur-based CICR.

Apart from the lower cost, Indian BT cotton varieties can also be reused, said Kranti.

**Read full, original post:** [BT Cotton sales by CICR may bring down seed cost of farmers](#)