Already-developed whitefly resistant GMO cotton could have protected Indian crop

The GLP aggregated and excerpted this blog/article to reflect the diversity of news, opinion and analysis.

In a quiet corner of a poly house maintained by the National Botanical Research Institute (NBRI), are manicured rows of cotton plants bearing flowers. Nothing unusual; unless you are told that these cotton plants are resistant to tiny whitefly pests, which this year have wrecked havoc in cotton plantations, causing heavy losses and triggering several reported farmers' suicides.

Red tape and the lack of a proper mechanism for speedy transfer of technology to farms prevented the commercial rollout of the variety, which could have saved the cotton crop.

"In 2012-13 we had first demonstrated this whitefly resistant variety in the NBRI glasshouse and the following year it was demonstrated in our poly house," says PK Singh, the lead scientist on the project.

The NBRI has filed for its patent in several countries. The process of filing for patents had started in 2011.

"We are confident of receiving the patent soon as this remains the only genetically modified (GM) cotton variety in the world with effective protection against whitefly," Singh says.

India's leading farm biotech company Maharashtra Hybrid Seeds Company (Mahyco) was first apprised of the research as early as 2010.

"Subsequently talks were held with Mahyco for possible technology transfer and other collaborations. However, the negotiations were stuck last year over pricing and certain conditions," says Singh.

Mahyco finally withdrew from the negotiations citing uncertainty over the issue of GM crops in India.

"We have written to the Punjab Agricultural University, Ludhiana, about the whitefly resistant cotton and they have shown interest," Singh says.

Before this cotton variety can be made commercially available, it will need field trials after approval by the GM Board and other regulatory bodies.

Read full, original post: [Whitefly resistant cotton variety developed](#)