

Indian researchers developing new insect resistant GMO cotton varieties

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The Central Institute of Cotton Research in Nagpur has introduced Bt genes into 21 cotton seed varieties, which scientists say can be provided to farmers at 10% of the price of hybrid seeds. These also offer better pest resistance, they claim.

The Bt varieties are being provided this year to the state agricultural departments of Telangana and Maharashtra for multi-location testing to be carried out by the state agricultural universities.

The best Bt-varieties will be identified from the multi-location field trial results of 2016 and the seeds will be made available to farmers from 2017. "After the Ministry of Agriculture confirmed that there was no patent on genetically modified (GM) Bt Cotton (Bollgard-mon 531) brought by Monsanto 14 years ago to India, we will now be introducing Bt genes to traditional Indian cotton varieties," said KR Kranthi, director of the Central Institute for Cotton Research (CICR).

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"We expect that with Bt genes, high yields can be obtained from these Bt varieties at low production cost, even under rain-fed farming, particularly in states such as Maharashtra and Telangana," said a scientist from the Indian Council of Agriculture Research in New Delhi.

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Unlike a majority of the Bt hybrids available in the market that are susceptible to sap-sucking insect pests and diseases, almost all the public sector non-Bt cotton varieties have a broad range of natural tolerance, said a CICR scientist. "Pyramiding these traits with Bt genes will provide broad-spectrum resistance against bollworms, whiteflies, leaf hoppers and the cotton leaf curl virus."

Read full, original post: [Monsanto faces challenge from CICR's Bt cotton varieties](#)