

## Why Indian farmers are buying unapproved herbicide-resistant GMO cotton seeds

If market and industry estimates are true, Indian farmers have, in the current kharif season, bought and planted about [350,000] packets of genetically modified (GM) cotton seeds incorporating unapproved “herbicide tolerance” or HT technology.

Right now, the only GM cotton permitted to be grown in India are hybrids/varieties that contain ‘cry1Ac’ and ‘cry2Ab’ genes, isolated from the soil bacterium *Bacillus thuringiensis* (Bt) and coding for proteins toxic to bollworm insect pests. The government hasn’t so far approved cultivation of cotton harbouring other GM traits, including resistance to specific herbicides.

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Cotton cultivation typically entails three rounds of weeding, each requiring 9-10 laborers per acre. At Rs 1,500-2,000 for every round — plus 2-3 times of bullock inter-culture operations, each costing Rs 500-600 — the farmer would spend upwards of Rs 6,000 per acre on removing weeds that compete with his crop for nutrients and water. If all this trouble — including finding labor just when most need — can be avoided by spraying herbicide, and there is technology enabling that, one can easily understand why nine [hundred thousand] farmers may have planted HT cotton, even without official approval.

If only the government and the NGOs, too, understand.

**The GLP aggregated and excerpted this article to reflect the diversity of news, opinion and analysis. Read full, original post: [Grey Market: When nearly a million Indian farmers plant ‘unapproved’ GM cotton](#)**