

Sustainable rewards worth the risks? India cracks down on farmers growing unapproved glyphosate-tolerant cotton

A high-level expert panel set up by the Indian Prime Minister's Office (PMO) has found that nearly 15% [of the country's cotton] was planted with illegally produced and unapproved herbicide tolerant (HT) seeds [last year].

[Editor's note: India's cotton crop is approximately 90% GMO; all of the genetically engineered cotton is an insect-resistant variety known as Bt. This controversy revolves around a HT variety trait variety legal in other countries, which allows farmers to cut back drastically on the use of highly toxic herbicides and substitute instead glyphosate, which is of low toxicity.]

...

Farmers are using "HT cotton for 1-2 years and are satisfied with the technology which is less labour intensive and hence is cost beneficial," the report said pointing to the risks farmers are taking despite the possibility of facing prosecution or seeds turning out to be of poor quality.

...

"Some farmers complained about the lack of trait purity (or seed quality and effectiveness) but they could not do much as they do not have any bill to show as a proof of seed purchase," the report said.

...

Using HT cotton seeds, farmers can spray herbicides like glyphosate which kills the weed but not the cotton plant which is genetically tolerant to chemical sprays. [Editor's note:

Currently India allows glyphosate to be used only for tea plantations and non-agricultural use.

...

Based on its findings the FISEC panel recommended state governments to "destroy all confiscated HT cotton seeds", enforce labelling requirements by GEAC such that only approved seeds are available in the market, and restrict use of glyphosate in farming.

Editor's note: "Kharif" is the fall growing season in India, during which farmers plant and harvest cotton and other crops.

Read full, original article: [High-level committee blows the lid off illegal cotton seed business](#)