# Despite anti-GMO ‘whispering,’ Bangladesh says ‘science-based information’ will guide its biotech policy

Bt eggplant, or brinjal as it’s known in Bangladesh, is the first genetically engineered food crop to be successfully introduced in South Asia. Bt brinjal is helping some of the world’s poorest farmers to feed their families and communities, improve profits and dramatically reduce pesticide use.

Bt brinjal was first developed [by] scientists [who] inserted a gene from the bacterium Bacillus thuringiensis (Bt) into nine brinjal varieties. The plants were engineered to resist the fruit and shoot borer, a devastating insect whose larvae bore into the stem and fruit of an eggplant.

…

A recent survey found 50 percent of farmers in Bangladesh said that they experienced illness due to the intense spraying of insecticides.

“It’s terrible for these farmers’ health and the health of the environment to spray so much,” said [Tony] Shelton, [Cornell professor of entomology], who found that pesticide use on Bt eggplant was reduced as much as 92 percent in commercial Bt brinjal plantings. “Bt brinjal is a solution that’s really making a difference in people’s lives.”

…

In a March 2017 workshop, Bangladeshi Agriculture Minister Begum Matia Chowdhury called Bt brinjal “a success story of local and foreign collaboration.”

“We will be guided by the science-based information, not by the nonscientific whispering of a section of people,” Chowdhury said. “As human beings, it is our moral obligation that all people in our country should get food and not go to bed on an empty stomach. Biotechnology can play an important role in this effect.”

**Read full, original article:** Bt eggplant improving lives in Bangladesh