Indian farmers double yields with Bt cotton, but pest resistance issues complicate its advantages

Ever since India adopted genetically modified Bt cotton in 2002, a bitter battle has been raging to define the narrative over its impact …. Stories have begun appearing pointing to a supposed new “failure” in India’s GM cotton revolution — an invasion of the pink bollworm pest, which appears to be becoming resistant to the insecticidal proteins in Bt cotton.

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So what is the real story? …. We reached out to Bt cotton experts …. According to Dr. Ronald Herring [an authority] on …. Bt cotton in India, “the pink bollworm problem is real,” albeit “till recently isolated in India. I’d first want to rule out counterfeit seeds.” He noted that fake GM seeds are “a huge problem in India” …. farmers who thought they were growing Bt cotton had …. varieties with little or no expression of any Bt gene.”

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Dr. Srinivasan Ramasamy, a visiting scientist …. at Cornell University, [said]: “I don’t agree that Bt cotton has failed in India.”

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“After the introduction of Bt cotton, the yield has almost doubled within six years. However, the decline in yield is only about 15 percent in the last six or seven years,” [Ramasamy said]. Therefore, Bt cotton still outperforms conventional varieties ….

Herring noted “…. All pest protection eventually becomes less useful because plants adapt faster than humans can devise new preventatives …. Bt offers some terrific advantages but is no silver bullet ….”

Read full, original article: The complicated truth behind GMO cotton in India