

GM cotton could revive Nigeria's 'comatose' textile industry, government says

Despite growing opposition against introduction of Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs) in the country, the Federal Ministry of Science and Technology (FMST) has named, registered and released into the Nigerian Seed Market, two transgenic cotton hybrid varieties through the National Varietal release Committee at the National Centre for Genetic Resources and Biotechnology (NACGRAB), National Biotechnology Development Agency (NABDA), and Moor Plantation, Ibadan, Oyo State.

Minister of Science and Technology, Dr. Ogbonnaya Onu, told journalists that the varieties were developed to contain *Bacillus thuringiensis* (Bt) agents that confer on them the ability to resist attack by bollworm, a devastating pest disease that has hampered cotton production with time and represents a nightmare to farmers.

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He said the farmers' perception in the field was very positive in terms of seed cotton yield and tolerance to insect pests especially bollworm complex. This great feat will enhance production and productivity of cotton in the country as well as revamp the textile industry, which used to be the second employer of labor in [the] 60's -70's.

Onu said that this is a landmark in the history of modern biotechnology in Nigeria as the newly improved varieties have the [potential to revamp] the comatose textile industry by boosting cotton production in Nigeria.

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