

Viewpoint: Burkina Faso's declining cotton yields illustrate need for GMO crops

At a forum on biotech crops and the Big Four Agenda at the University of Nairobi on April 24, critics of biotechnology, citing the Burkina Faso cotton fiasco, repeatedly misrepresented the facts about its genetically modified (GM) cotton farming.

The truth is, cotton production in the west African country has been on a downward slide since three years ago after the government phased out the pest-resistant GM cotton (also called Bt cotton).

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Formerly Africa's largest cotton producer for a long time, Burkina Faso now ranks fourth, having lost the position to Mali two years ago, allegedly after it phased out GM cotton. It trails Côte d'Ivoire (455,000 tonnes), Mali (653,000 tonnes) and Benin (675,000 tonnes).

The decline is attributed to factors such as regional farmer boycotts and bad weather. But farmers also blame the situation on increased pest attacks following the government's decision to phase out GMO cotton and return to conventional seeds.

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Overall, GM cotton reduced the use of pesticides by up to 70 per cent while increasing productivity by about 22 per cent and smallholder farmer profits by an average of 51 per cent.

Read full, original article: [Bt cotton lessons from Burkina Faso](#)