

After illegal seed planting in 2019, Indian farmers again demand access to GMO herbicide-tolerant cotton

Cotton growers in Maharashtra are once again demanding permission to sow seeds of herbicide tolerant (Ht) genetically modified (GM) cotton. Former minister of state for agriculture Sudabhau Khot, while speaking to The Indian Express, expressed support for this demand.

Last year in June, the district collectorate of Akola had lodged [complaints] against farmer organizations who had carried out a civil disobedience movement and taken up sowing of non-approved variants. India has permitted just one GM crop-BT cotton. This variant was permitted for commercial release in 2002 by the Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee (GEAC).

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Weeding has become a major issue for cotton growers, both due to the cost as well as the labor involved. In Maharashtra, growers said they end up paying as much as Rs 10,000 per acre for the process. With agriculture labor increasingly becoming spare, farmers have been surreptitiously sowing Ht Bt Cotton, relying on seed smuggled from neighboring states.

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