Video: GM insect-resistant cotton boosted India’s crop yields 29% and farmer incomes $24.31 billion

Insect-resistant (IR) cotton has impacted the lives of Indian farmers since it was introduced in 2002. This is according to Graham Brookes of PG Economics Ltd, who was one of the speakers during the ISAAA Webinar Global Impact of GM Crops held on October 15, 2020. His data for the socio-economic impact of GM crops was supported by the success story of the Indian farmer, Mr. V. Ravichandran.

In 2018, 95% of Indian farmers were using Bt cotton technology. PG Economics data show that its yield impact is +29% and the average farm income gain amounts to US$ 193.56 per hectare. In terms of return on investment, a farmer earns an extra US$ 12.95 for every US$ 1.00 he spent on IR cotton seed. All these round up to a total farm income gain of US $24.31 billion with a production impact of 14.73 million tons of lint from 2002 to 2018.

Mr. V. Ravichandran, an influential farmer in India and Director of the Global Farmer Network, shared his 34-year cotton farming experience. Prior to planting Bt cotton, Ravichandran encountered the same problems that other cotton farmers had: yield loss due to pests, continuous application of pesticides, and pest-resistance to these pesticides.

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He found that Bt cotton planting was the cheapest and most profitable option. Ravichandran continues to enjoy the benefits of GM technology today.

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