

Kenya anticipates massive increase in crop production as GM, insect-resistant cotton distribution begins

The [Kenyan] Ministry of Agriculture started the distribution of Bt (Bacillus Thuringiensis) cotton seeds to farmers as it embarks on revamping the sector, which was a wild success in the 1970s and 80s but has since sunk and has for years been on its deathbed. The attempts to revamp the industry came after the Cabinet approved its commercial adoption after the field trials posted positive results.

Anthony Muriithi acting chief executive of Agriculture and Food Authority (Afa) said the renewed push by the government, which is seen in the seed distribution as well as reforms on institutions is expected to initially shore up production of cotton at the firm level. He added that there are efforts to scale up capacity through the value chain, aiming at increasing export earnings from cotton.

“The BT and conventional cotton seeds have been distributed to the farmers. It is envisaged that annual production will grow from the current 20,000 bales to over 200,000 bales by 2022,” he said.

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Bt Cotton is genetically engineered to be resistant to certain pests and also yields up to three times more than the conventional varieties and is expected to play a key role in the revival of the sector.

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