

Bangladesh developing new generation of genetically engineered disease-resistant Bt eggplant to fight plant diseases, dramatically cutting insecticide use

Starting with only 20 farmers in 2014, the technology of Bt brinjal – a crop developed to drastically lower hazardous pesticide application – reached to 65,000 eggplant growers this year, making it the fastest expanding biotech product in Bangladesh.

Bt brinjal, a genetically modified eggplant variety, was developed to fight fruit and shoot borer (FSB) that used to cause colossal crop loss in Bangladesh's brinjal fields but not anymore.

Now, riding on the huge success of Bangladesh's fastest expanding biotech crop, breeders are working on developing two new eggplant varieties capable to withstand FSB and bacterial wilt.

Together with FSB, the bacterial wilt causes substantial crop loss in brinjal, second most consumed vegetable in Bangladesh after potato.

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The study outcome found that the farmers who cultivated the Bt brinjal gained by 55 percent higher income comparing to their peers growing the non-Bt brinjal.

The genetically modified Bt brinjal has been developed by inserting a crystal protein gene (Cry1Ac) from the soil bacterium *Bacillus thuringiensis* into the genome of various brinjal cultivars.

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There is an array of other biotech crop products now under release and development pipeline in Bangladesh which include, among others, Vitamin-A enriched Golden Rice, bacterial blight resistant potato, leafcurl resistant tomato, and Bt cotton.

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