

How genetically modified seeds are revitalizing the Kenyan cotton market

When white-fluffy balls held by shrubby plants started to disappear from farms in Kenya's eastern lowlands almost three decades ago, so did processors, cooperatives alongside other key value chain actors who had kept the wheels of the cotton industry turning.

As time progressed, the scenario would extend to the rest of the 24 cotton-growing regions in the country, rendering farmers destitute amid lost income.

Fortunately, despite the previous sorry state of affairs, the white cash crop is looking to reclaim its position among Kenya's top foreign exchange earners thanks to sustained efforts to scale up the adoption of [genetically modified] varieties.

"I am currently growing the new hybrid seed made available by the government last year. It is high yielding and fast-maturing, better than the conventional HART 89 variety," said Milton Katia, a veteran cotton farmer.

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The new varieties are envisioned to stimulate the dormant textile and apparel industry in addition to contributing to growth of the local manufacturing sector. The average production of cotton is also forecast to climb up from 20,000 bales (about 4,340 metric tons) per year to around 200,000 bales.

[This is an excerpt. Read the original post here.](#)