

GMO Opposition Week

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The first GM crops- Cotton is the first crop to come to India and in Andhra Pradesh. The Monsanto in collaboration with the Mahyco Company of Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, they introduced in large quantities of this genetically modified cotton. The first batch of the seeds was released in the commercial market in 2002. Earlier, it was reported that some trials were conducted, but the data was never made public till 2003 and 2004.

In 2002 itself, our study started under the Deccan Development Society, and the consortium of NGOs working in Warangal, Adilabad and Nalgonda districts. This consortium has taken up the study by fortnightly observations in the field.

The results, so far obtained indicated that the Bt cotton which is the genetically modified cotton- by transferring the gene of *Bacillus Thuringiensis* into the cotton plant, new hybrid has not shown any substantial advantage over the local hybrids, or over the local practices. The yield was marginally high but the pesticide consumption has never come down. When the claimed promises of the companies said that the farmers have not to use any pesticide against the *Heliothis* or *Helicoverpa* but after 90 days, there was emergence of the pests, and ultimately, the total cost of pesticide remained unaltered compared to Bt and the non-Bt. Both of them were almost equal.

On the other hand, the proportion of the sucking pest like *Jassids*, *aphids*, whitefly has increased tremendously over the previous seasons. And they have become now the major pests and the cost of pesticide is almost remaining at the higher level.

On the other hand, the non Bt crops, even though they were suffering from the *Heliothis* damage, but they had not much damage by the sucking pest. This has evidently come out from the study.

Coming to the other factors which have made this Bt crops more dangerous for the farming community here and the local indigenous crops is that, the Bt cotton when followed by chilies- plenty of chilies, nearly up to 30 to 40 percent is wilting away, because of the new disease of cotton which has come along with Bt cotton, that is *Rhizotonia* Rot. This Rot is taking almost a major share by destructing the cotton bolls and also the cotton plants. In the indigenous hybrid, this problem was never there during the last fifteen- twenty years. But now *Rhizotonia* Rot is the major disease which is causing nearly 20 to 40 percent of mortality among the cotton Bt plants. This has come out very clearly in the study. So what we feel now is that, the Bt cotton is no way better compared to other non Bt hybrids.

The third point during the study we found was that a Non Pesticidal approach has been much more or equally good in the productivity and net profits to the farmers. So we feel that Bt cotton is merely a fraud on the farmers and this simply causing more loss, not only to cotton crop but also infecting our soils which carrying forward this *Rhizotonia* fungus from season to season, in chilies tomato and other crops.

So, we feel that there is no need of Bt cotton at all, which is not giving any relief to the farmers, on the other hand, it is sickening the soils, it is sickening the other succeeding crops.