



**Press Release to the National Workshop on 'Disappearing non-GM cotton – ways forward to maintain diversity, increase availability and ensure quality of non-GM cotton seed'**

In the last years, India has become the largest organic cotton producer worldwide with an increasing number of organic cotton projects throughout the country. Conversely in 2010, more than 80% of India's cotton area is grown with genetically modified Bt-cotton. On account of this, the seed supply chain of non-GM cotton genotypes is delinked. Since the private and even many public sectors have mostly withdrawn from the production of non-GM cotton seed, the supply of non-GM seed to the remaining 20% of farmers, including organic cotton projects, has become a critical issue. If no measures are taken to hold this process, the number of years for non-GM cotton seed production is counted. The absolute dominance of GM-cotton production will not only threaten India's organic cotton sector, but will also reduce genetic diversity, which in long run will affect the agro-ecosystem equilibrium.

The shortage of non-GM cotton seed in India urged the University of Agricultural Sciences Dharwad (UAS Dharwad), bioRe India (Ltd) and the Research Institute of Organic Agriculture (FiBL Switzerland) to launch a national workshop on 'Disappearing non-GM cotton – ways forward to maintain diversity, increase availability and ensure quality of non-GM cotton seed'. The workshop took place on the 21-22 June 2011 in Dharwad, bringing together over fifty participants of leading research institutes and organisations such as UAS Dharwad, CICR Nagpur, different Indian organic cotton groups, representatives of the textile and the seed industry, and other concerned stakeholders.

The two-day deliberation was inaugurated by acting Vice Chancellor, Dr. B. M. Khadi in presence of Dr. Krishna Nayak, Director of Instruction and Chief guest Dr. D. Forster from (FiBL) declared the workshop as open. Senior cotton scientist like Dr. S. S. Patil from UAS Dharwad, Dr. M. V. Venugopalan from CICR Nagpur, Dr. Anupam Barik, Director DOCD Mumbai, Dr. D. Forster from (FiBL) Switzerland, and Rajeev Baruah, Director of BioRe India (Ltd) spoke on this occasion.

During the workshop the following topics were discussed:

- Overview on GM and non-GM cotton research and production in India;
- Indian policy on cotton seed development;
- Opportunities and challenges of the organic cotton sector;
- Quality aspects and needs of non-GM (organic) cotton seed production;
- Research and breeding initiatives of NGOs.

After a lively discussion Dr. S.S. Patil (USAD) summarised the talks and depicted the roadmap to increase availability and ensure quality of non-GM cotton seed in future.

The disappearance of non-GM cotton in India and the awareness for genetic erosion convinced concerned stakeholders to give high priority to this issue. The workshop came out with a declaration, which highlights how the present crisis of seed supply can be overcome through intensive research on developing varieties for organic conditions and re-establishing the seed value chain for non-GM cotton. Details here unto are stated in the enclosed Dharwad Declaration 21th June 2011. Furthermore, it was agreed upon forming a national organisation body of organic cotton focusing on drawing the attention of policy makers and everyone concerned towards confronted challenges in organic cotton farming and immediate actions needed for overcoming the cotton seed crisis.

Dharwad, 21 June 2011

The Organizing Committee

- Research Institute of Organic Agriculture (FiBL), Ackerstrasse, CH-5070 Frick, Switzerland
- bioRe India (Ltd), 5th km Milestone, Kasravad Mandleshwar Road, Tehsil Kasravad, District Khargone – 451228, Madhya Pradesh, India
- University of Agricultural Sciences Dharwad (UAS Dharwad), Dharwad - 580 005, Karnataka, India