



Media Release

GM cotton seeds a threat to Indian farmers

Extensive use of genetically modified (GM) cotton seeds is destroying agricultural bio-diversity and jeopardising the livelihood of over four million cotton growers in India. In a common declaration, concerned stakeholders committed themselves to join forces to promote non-GM and organic cotton.

(Frick, July 6, 2011) India has become the largest organic cotton producer worldwide with the number of organic cotton projects increasing throughout the country. Conversely, in 2010 more than 80 percent of India's cotton area used genetically modified Bt-cotton seeds. On account of this, the seed supply chain of non-GM cotton genotypes has become delinked. Since the private and also many public sectors have largely stopped producing non-GM cotton seed, the supply of non-GM seed to the remaining 20 percent of farmers, including organic cotton projects, has become of critical concern. If no measures are taken to halt this process, the number of years for non-GM cotton seed production is numbered. The absolute dominance of GM-cotton production will not only threaten India's organic cotton sector, but will also reduce genetic diversity, which in the long run will affect the agroecosystem equilibrium.

Intensive research needed

Initiated by the University of Agricultural Sciences Dharwad (UAS Dharwad), bioRe India (Ltd) and the Research Institute of Organic Agriculture (FiBL Switzerland), a national workshop was held in Dharwad (India) at the end of June bringing together over fifty participants from leading research institutes and organizations, including UAS Dharwad, Central Institute for Cotton Research (CICR) in Nagpur, various Indian organic cotton groups and representatives from the textile and the seed industry. In a common declaration signed by concerned stakeholders, ways to overcome the present crisis in seed supply is presented. Furthermore, a decision was made to form a national organizational body for organic cotton focusing on the immediate actions necessary to overcome the cotton seed crisis. "We need intensive research on developing varieties for organic and low-input

EXCELLENCE FOR SUSTAINABILITY

Das FiBL hat Standorte in der Schweiz, Deutschland und Österreich
FiBL offices located in Switzerland, Germany and Austria
FiBL est basé en Suisse, Allemagne et Autriche

FiBL Schweiz / Suisse
Ackerstrasse, CH-5070 Frick
Tel. +41 (0)62 865 72 72
info.suisse@fibl.org, www.fibl.org



Forschungsinstitut für biologischen Landbau
Institut de recherche de l'agriculture biologique
Research Institute of Organic Agriculture
Istituto di ricerche dell'agricoltura biologica
Instituto de investigaciones para la agricultura orgánica

conditions and combined efforts to re-establish the seed value chain for non-GM cotton”, underlines FiBL scientist Dionys Forster.

Contact

- > Dionys Forster, International Division, Project leader agricultural systems comparison India, Tel. +41 (0)62 865 0452
- > Monika Messmer, Project leader breeding for organic an low-input farming, Tel. +41 (0)62 865 0443
- > Jacqueline Forster-Zigerli, Media Relations, Tel. +41 (0)62 865 7271,

Download of this media release

This media release is available at www.fibl.org/en/media.html.