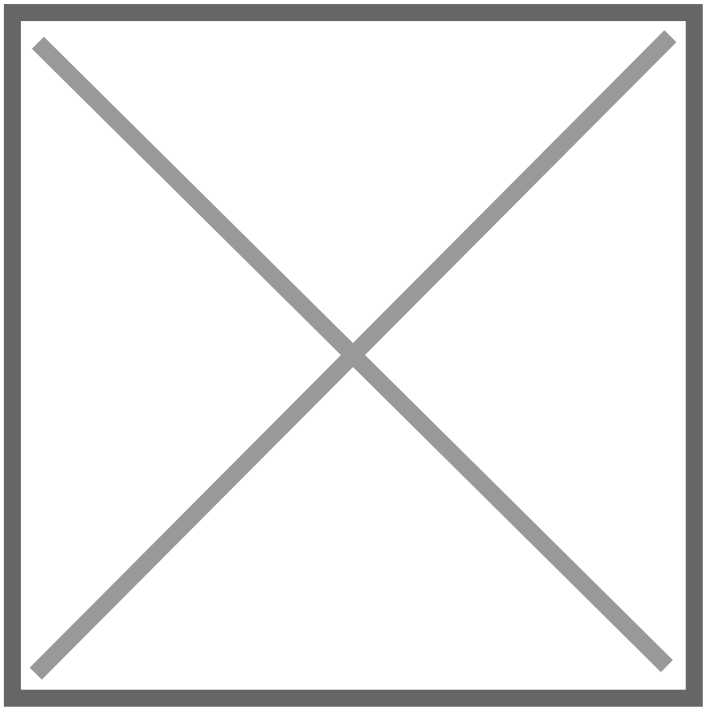
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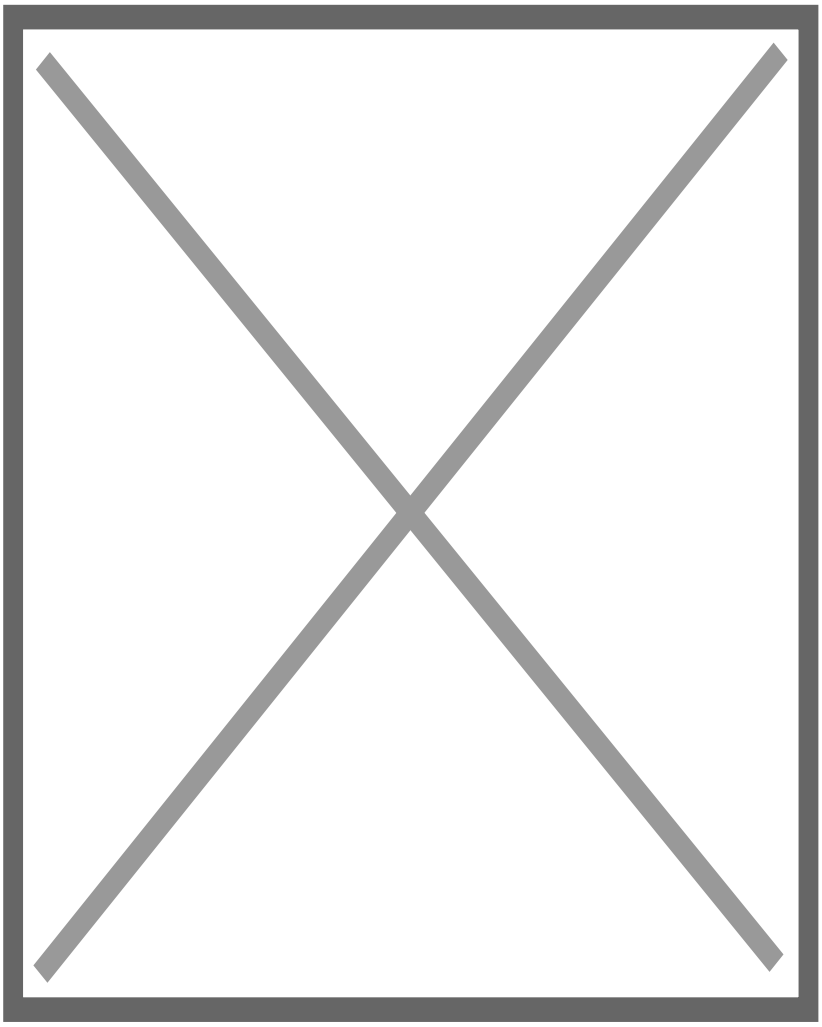
India among top 10 growers of biotech crops

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In 2005, India accounted for the highest yearly percentage growth rate increasing its Bt cotton area by 160 percent. With this India became the seventh largest adopter of biotech crop, according to a report authored by Dr Clive James, chairman and founder of ISAAA, the International Service for the Acquisition of Agri-biotech Applications.



India recorded three-fold increase, by planting 1.3 million hectares of Bt cotton in 2005 compared to 500,000 hectares in 2004. Around 10 lakh resource poor farmers elected to plant Bt cotton in the northern, central and southern cotton growing zones which is a three-fold increase over 2004. During the year, 16 new varieties of Bt cotton hybrids belonging to four companies (Ankur Seeds, Mahyco-Monsanto, Nuziveedu Seeds and Rasi Seeds) were released totaling to 20 Bt cotton hybrids. Three companies (JK AgriGenetics, Nath Seeds, Syngenta) received permission for large-scale field trials of biotech cotton with different genes in 2005. Presently, more than 25 companies are developing different varieties of biotech cotton hybrids with different genes and with staked genes/multiple traits i.e., cry1Ac, cryAb, GFM-cry1Aa, Vip-3a, cry1Ac+cry2Ab said the report.

The University of Agricultural Sciences, Dharwad along with the Central Institute for Cotton Research (CICR), Nagpur is developing its own biotech cotton varieties employing Bt gene and is likely to be made available to farmers soon. The approval of more numbers of Bt cotton hybrids is likely to grow further in 2006 and researchers are exploring the future potential for multiple traits in biotech cotton.

Summing up the global biotech crop scenario, the report stated that worldwide farmer demand has driven annual double-digit increases in biotech crop adoption since the crops were commercialized a decade ago. In 2005, four new countries and a quarter million more farmers planted biotech crops as part of an 11 percent increase in global biotech crop area. Since initial commercialization in 1996, global planted area of biotech crops has soared by more than fifty-fold from 1.7 million hectares in six countries to 90 million hectares in 21 countries in 2005. The 8.5 million farmers planting biotech crops in 2005 also marked a significant milestone as the 1 billionth cumulative acre or 400 millionth hectare was planted.

Further there has been a lot of bioagri research happening in India. There has been work going on in transgenic brinjal, rice, corn, chicken pea, and several other food crops. If the policy to allow the transgenic foods is announced, the events are expected to turn even faster.