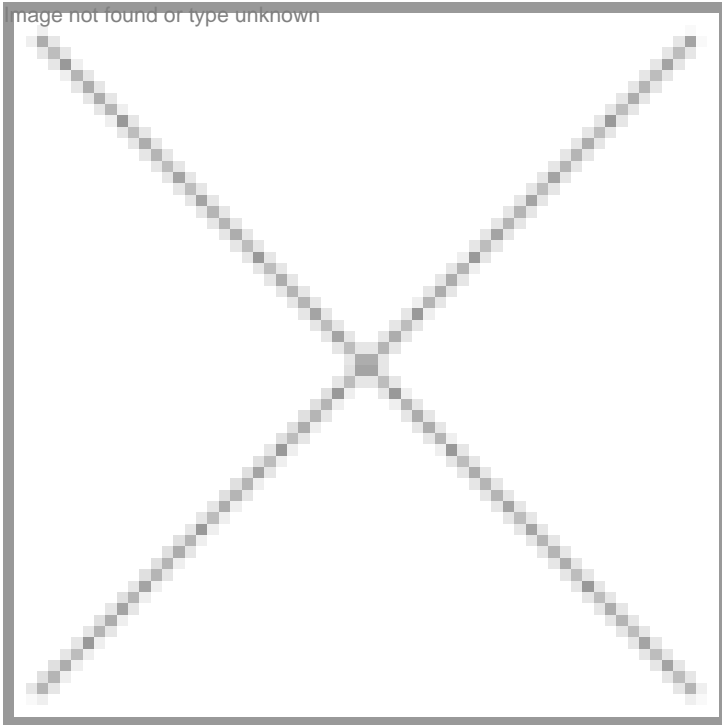


"Indian seed industry is well placed to serve both domestic and international markets"

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-Dr MK Sharma, managing director, Mahyco Monsanto

What are your views about the future of the seed industry? How do you expect to grow vis-à-vis the industry?

The seed industry in India has been making great strides since Independence. The impetus to this was also provided by the changes that have taken place in the economic and agriculture scenario of the country and also the international environment. Globalization and economic reforms have opened new opportunities with many challenges. The Indian seed industry is well placed to serve both domestic and international markets. The seed industry is now in a position to meet the demand of diverse agro-climatic conditions and intensive cropping systems. The ever-increasing demand for agriculture products can only be met by sustained increase in production and productivity to which new and improved variety of quality seeds contribute to a greater extent. The Indian seed industry is now in a better position to face such challenges by investing more in research and development programs, use of biotechnology, acquisitions, mergers and collaborations with like-minded research companies to bring synergy, addition of new range of crops, products and technologies and also value-addition to the existing crops by traditional methods.

From here biotechnology will play an important role in agriculture development through transgenic seeds. It holds great promise in developing crop varieties with higher level of tolerance to biotic and abiotic stresses and nutritional enhancement.

Bollgard (Bt) cotton the first and presently the only Indian transgenic crop is one of the best example to prove such claims.

For the growth of seed industry, what are key levers, critical issues and blockers?

For smooth growth of the seed industry, it is a must to remove road blocks like:

Equal treatment for public and private sector in matters like subsidy on seed

Protection through regulation to technologies developed by private sector from unauthorized use.

There should be a science-based and less time consuming regulatory system for the release of transgenic crops. Also commercial decisions like price and packing should be the prerogative of the inventor only. The seed industry should be treated at par with other similar agro-based industry in all taxation matters including income tax.

How is the whole process of seed production, processing and quality control monitored?

The monitoring of seed quality is a long drawn continuous process which starts from breeder seed, foundation seed to hybrid/variety seed production and continues through seed processing and finally packing and its storage. At every step, strict monitoring is done by technically qualified seed production and quality control supervisors, by visiting the seed production field at specific stages of seed crop to ensure that there is no contaminant in the field or in required isolation area. Seed from only those production fields, which meet the required field standards during the crop season is accepted for processing. Prior to and after processing the samples are drawn for various tests namely genetic purity, germination, vigor and physical purity. In case of transgenic crop, test for the presence of trait is also carried out. Seed lots declared pass in all above referred tests are finally packed and dispatched for distribution. Lots which fail to meet the required standard in any one or more tests are declared as unfit for use as seed. Seed processing is carried out at the company's own seed processing plant located in various states, in close proximity to seed production areas. The processing plants are well equipped with imported, efficient and high capacity seed processing machines

How is the company able to withstand the competition from other players?

Mahyco strives to provide quality seeds. Since its inception it has been engaged in plant genetic research and production of quality seeds. Currently it is engaged in developing genetically enhanced crops with the use of gene transfer technology. Mahyco is the first company to commercially grow and market the transgenic Bollgard (Bt) cotton – India's first transgenic crop in 2002. Presently Mahyco scientists are busy in genetically modifying cereal and vegetable crops to infuse them with novel traits such as resistance to drought, herbicide, sucking pest and nutritional enhancement.

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