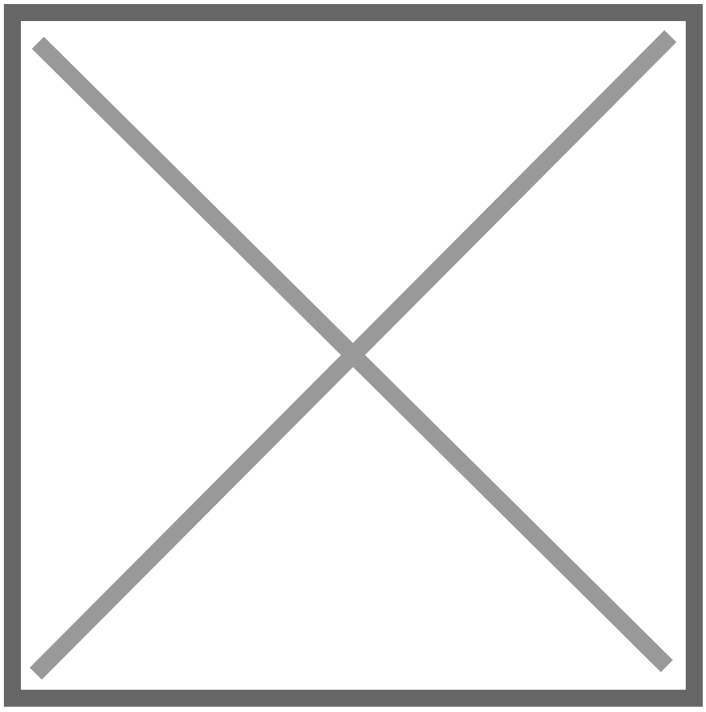
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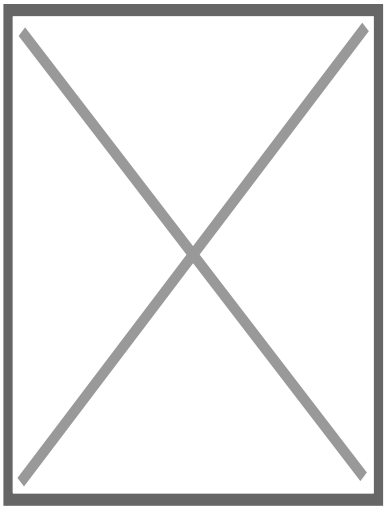
Bt Cotton Maker

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Rasi Seeds accounted for 29 percent of the total Bt cotton seeds sold in India in the year 2006.



Business: Producing and marketing agri-biotechnology products

CEO: M Ramasami (MD)

Biotech Revenue: Rs 333.33 crore

Start-up Year: 1973

Address: 273, Kamarajanar Road, Attur, Salem - 636 102, Tamil Nadu

Tel.: 91-4282-241007/242007

Fax: 91-4282-242558

Website: www.rasiseeds.com

Rasi Seeds has achieved a total turnover of over Rs 340 crore during the year 2006-07.

It is a leading seed company located at Attur near Salem in Tamil Nadu. The company is committed to serve the needs of farmers across India by supplying quality seeds of various crops. M Ramasami, the founder and promoter of Rasi Seeds, is a graduate in agriculture and has 30 years of experience in the seed industry. Rasi Seeds was started as partnership firm in 1973 and transformed into a privately held company in 1986. Its R&D center has been recognized by the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research (DSIR), Ministry of Science and Technology, Government of India. Rasi's product coverage measures an impressive figure of more than 10 million acres in the past decade. The company has undertaken limited field trials and large scale trials of several Bt cotton hybrids since kharif 2002. The GEAC has approved RCH 2 Bt cotton hybrid during 2004 for commercial cultivation. A total of 16 Bt cotton hybrids have been approved for commercial cultivation during the last four years. Thus, Rasi has emerged as a leader in Bt cotton seed distribution in India.

M Ramasami has been conferred with Velanmai Chemmal Award from the Tamil Nadu Agricultural University for his outstanding contribution to the seed industry. He was also chosen the BioSpectrum Person of the Year 2006. The company ranked fifth in the BioSpectrumÃ¢â?¬â??ABLE Industry Survey 2006 last year. It has been conferred with the National Award 2005 for "Successful commercialization of Bt cotton technology" during November 2005, by the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research, Ministry of Science and Technology. Apart from cotton, the company is concentrating its research efforts in other crops and has also released promising hybrids in maize, sunflower, bhendi, bottle gourd, ribbed gourd, bitter gourd, tomato and chilli for the benefit of the farming community. Currently the company is focusing its research efforts for crop improvement through Recombinant DNA technology (Genetic Engineering), in vitro plant tissue culture, molecular biology, molecular breeding in crops like bhendi, rice, tapioca, tomato and brinjal to address hitherto unsolved problems in these crops. Rasi Seeds accounted for 29 percent of the total Bt cottonseeds sold in India during the year 2006.

Rasi Seeds has a state-of Ã¢â?¬â??the-art biotechnology laboratory at Attur with facilities for research on DNA fingerprinting, DNA-based genetic purity test, and tissue culture and transformation of different crops. The company has a total staff strength of 420 personnel including PhD, MSc (Ag), BSc (Ag), and diploma holders both in R&D and production sections. The company has a strength of over 12,000 growers for the production of cotton, rice, bajra, maize, vegetables and other crops over an an area of 10,000 acres. Its other facilities include a well maintained research farm of 150 acres, a greenhouse of approximately 55,000 sft, dehumidified and air-conditioned storage for preserving germplasm of breeder seeds, modern high throughput biotech facility for molecular breeding of transgenic crop production.

The company has an excellent marketing network all over in India with branches in Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Punjab, Karnataka Gujarat and Tamil Nadu. It has two production centers, one at Attur and another at Kallakuruchi. The company has latest and sophisticated processing and packing machinery and a research wing to guide and produce high quality seeds. The company has entered contract farming with an ELS cotton hybrid with the objective of "breeding to branding", a new concept developed for the first time in the world.

"Bt cotton will continue to be in great demand"

- M Ramasami, MD, Rasi Seeds

When did you launch Bt cottonseeds in India? And why and when did you enter the Bt cotton area?

We launched Bt cottonseeds in India in 2004. RCH 2 Bt is our first Bt cotton hybrid.

I decided to enter the area of transgenic Bt cotton during 1997 after I realized that it is beneficial to the Indian farmers in view of reduced pesticide use and ensured yield by way of good protection from cotton bollworm attack. I was confident that environmental pollution could be substantially reduced since cotton is a crop that consumes maximum percentage of pesticides used for agricultural crops.

What were the challenges you faced during the launch of the Bt cottonseeds in India? And under which brand name (product name) do you market Bt cottonseeds in India?

When it was first introduced, there were mixed feelings among the farmers, as the technology was new to India. Further, there were many apprehensions. We had to do a lot of field demonstrations in all the cotton-growing regions of India to instill confidence among the farmers on the benefits of this wonderful technology. Our first Bt cotton hybrid was RCH 2 Bt. Currently we have 14 Bt cotton hybrids approved by the Government of India for commercial cultivation.

What is your current reach and how has the sales been?

We have reached 30 percent share on the total sale of Bt cotton during 2006 and our sale is 27 lakh packets of 450 grams each.

Which technology do you use? Are you looking at other technologies?

We have been using the Bollgard technology developed by Monsanto.

Currently I'm taking the initiative to outsource technologies, especially for drought, improving fertilizer use efficiency for viruses like yellow vein mosaic in bhendi, leaf curl virus in cotton and tomato etc. from promising technology providers around the world.

How do you see the future for Bt cottonseeds in India and other Bt food and feed crops?

Bt cotton will continue to be in great demand in view of the substantial benefits realized by the farmers. The efforts on increasing food production by conventional breeding has reached a plateau and to meet the growing demand for food, production efforts has to go up. The quick possible way is to reduce the loss due to insect pests. I am confident Bt food crops will help us to meet this challenge. I have no idea on the feed crops.

Do you see price war in this space with more agribiotech firms (with different technologies) entering the Bt cotton space?

Prices are decided by the value the consumer gets out of the technology. Better technology, germplasm and high net return will always fetch higher price.

What are the measures taken by your company regarding the availability of legal seeds and to put a check on illegal sale of spurious Bt cottonseeds in the market?

We are continuously creating communication to farmers about the benefits of Bt technology under superior germplasm background. We strongly believe that the menace of illegal seeds can be contained only by: Instilling confidence on the quality of seed and adequate supply at reasonable price; And making the farmers to realize that only legal seed suppliers are accountable and reliable.

Which are the other GM crops areas that you contemplate to enter?

We would be interested in insect resistant rice, brinjal, tomato, bhendi, virus resistant bhendi, tomato and cassava

What is the status of your R&D facility for GM crops?

Work is in progress to create the facility, sourcing technology, recruiting technical manpower.