

The Technologist

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Mahyco Monsanto Biotech (India), a 50:50 joint venture with Mahyco and Monsanto Holdings Pvt Ltd (MHPL), was created to bring the benefits of Bollgard cotton technology to farmers in India.

~~Mahyco Monsanto Biotech (India)~~

~~Business: Marketing of Bt technology in India~~

~~CEO: Dr MK Sharma (MD)~~

~~Biotech Revenue: Rs 150.30 crore~~

~~Start-up Year: 1998~~

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Mahyco Monsanto Biotech (India) Ltd is a 50:50 joint- venture with Mahyco and Monsanto Holdings Pvt Ltd (MHPL). Mahyco Monsanto Biotech (India) Ltd (MMB) is not a listed company and was created to bring the benefits of Bollgard cotton technology to farmers in India. In 2002, Bollgard cotton was the first biotech crop to be approved for commercialization in India by the GEAC. MMB registered a fall in its sales revenue to Rs 150.30 crore in 2006-07 over the previous year's sales of Rs 391.25 crore. The sudden fall in the revenue was mainly because of the government intervention in fixing the price for Bt cottonseeds during the 2006 kharif season. In 2005, it has generated revenue of Rs 391.25 crore by transferring the technology to the Indian seed companies.

MMB has sub-licensed the Bollgard technology to 23 Indian seed companies, all of whom are working to introduce the Monsanto gene into their own germplasm. With its continuous success, in 2006, GEAC approved the upgraded variant, Bollgard II, for commercialization. Bollgard is now sold in nine states in India and farmers currently have a choice of over 55 hybrids of Bollgard and Bollgard II supplied by 13 seed companies. In 2005, 21 hybrids got the approval for commercialization. The number has increased to 55 hybrids in 2006 with Bollgard (48 hybrids) and Bollgard II (7 hybrids) across the country. The total area covered under these hybrids in 2006 was 87.7 lakh acres with marginal coverage under Bollgard II.

MMB started sub licensing the technology much before the actual launch of Bt cotton in 2002. It was in 1998 it sublicensed the technology to other seed company. By 2002, it had five key seed companies as its partners. In the subsequent two years, it added another 18 companies. By 2005, it had 23 seed companies as its partners. MMB supports its sub licensees/ partners with the know-how of the technology. And also ensures that the seed partner should provide the best quality product to the farmers so that it is successful in the market. It has about 60 people working in the field, all of them being technical people with graduation in agriculture. To bring awareness about the new technology, advantages of adapting to it, during 2006, MMB alone contacted more than 6-8 lakh farmers. This reach was through various media like TV ads, print media and farmers meeting.

With more awareness, advantages and availability, its officials say that in 2007 and 2008 further more hybrids are expected and there will be more availability of legal seeds in the market. This will put a lot of pressure on the sale of illegal seeds in the market.