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Bt Cotton Pioneer

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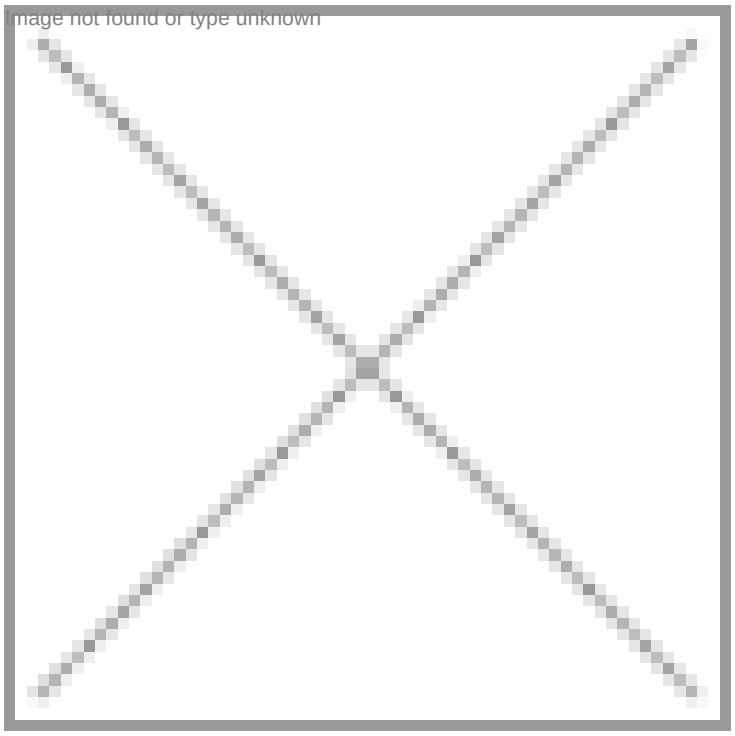

Bt Cotton Pioneer

Established and operated by Mahyco

Established in 1964, Mahyco is a pioneer and leader in the Indian seed industry.

Maharashtra Hybrid Seed Company Ltd

Business: Diagnostics solutions for GM crop testing

CEO: BR Barwale (Chairman)

Biotech Revenue: Rs 110.69 crore

Start-up Year: 1964

Address: PO Box 76, Jalna - Aurangabad Road, Dawalwadi, Dist.- Jalna, Maharashtra â€“ 431203

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Maharashtra Hybrid Seed Company, popularly known as Mahyco, increased its sales of Bt cottonseeds in 2006-07 to13 lakh packets from 9.2 lakh packets sold the previous year. Of the 13 lakh packets, 10.7 lakh packets were of Bollgard I while the rest were of Bollgard II variety. Although there was an increase in the sales of Bt cottonseed packets in 2006-07, the sales revenue stood more or less at the same level as that of the previous year. Its sales revenue from Bt cotton seeds for the year 2006-07 stood at Rs 110.69 crore. In 2005-06, its sales revenue from the Bt cotton hybrids stood at Rs 117.76 crore as it sold Bt cottonseeds packets at Rs 1,280 per packet.

While during the last kharif season Mahyco sold Bollgard I variety at Rs 750 per packet, it sold Bollgard II at Rs 1,330 per packet. For the current kharif season, Mahyco is expected to market about 25 lakh packets of both Bollgard I and Bollgard II varieties. The drop in sales revenue was mainly because of 41 percent fall in the price of Bollgard I varieties because of government intervention.

A company official too noted that the fall in the sales revenue was because of the fall in price for the Bt cottonseeds of Bollgard I variety over the previous year's price. However, the sale of Bollgard II that priced premium over the Bollgard I variety has supported the company to some extent. Farmers are now shifting from Bollgard I to Bollgard II technology because of its advantages and this is a good sign for the company.

During 2006, Mahyco received a green signal from Genetic Engineering Approval Committee (GEAC) for commercial cultivation of two of its hybrids, MRC-6025 and MRC-6029, containing cry 1Ac gene Mon 531 event in the North zone for a period of three years starting from the 2006 kharif season. With this it has added two more Bt hybrids seeds to its list of seven Bt cotton hybrids, which got approval till 2005 kharif season. So far the farmers in the north zone of the country are cultivating MRC 6304 and MRC 6301 hybrids and in the central zone Mech 12, Mech 162 and Mech 184 and in south Mech 162*, Mech 184*, MRC 6322 and MRC 6918 (* not approved for commercial cultivation in Andhra Pradesh). For 2007 it received GEAC's approval for two more varieties.

Mahyco is the first Indian company to commercially grow and market transgenic Bollgard cotton- India's first transgenic crop in 2002. Since its inception it has been engaged in plant genetic research and production of quality hybrid seeds for the farming community of India. Currently, it is engaged in the research, production, processing and marketing of 115 products in 30 crop species including cereals, oilseeds, fibre and vegetables. Mahyco is also developing genetically enhanced crops with the use of gene transfer technology.

At Mahyco, plant biotechnology is viewed as a tool to be used in a selective manner, as an integral part of plant breeding programs. Traits of value, which are difficult to breed for, or are absent in germplasm available to breeders, are the focus of biotechnology research at Mahyco. Making such traits available enables its breeders to incorporate them in a precise manner, eliminating unwanted traits that could be carried along in traditional breeding methods.

In 1998, Mahyco established a new research facility, the Mahyco Research Center, near Jalna-Aurangabad, Maharashtra, to conduct cutting-edge biotechnology research in a number of areas relevant to crop improvement and productivity; while still remaining close to its roots in rural agriculture and seeds research. Major research areas include crop transformation, molecular virology, molecular microbiology, gene discovery and molecular markers, entomology and diagnostics. To monitor the trait protein content in genetically modified (GM) crops, it established DesiGen Diagnostics to provide diagnostics solutions for GM crop testing for research scientists, seed producers and farmers.

Mahyco Research Center is one of Asia's most advanced seed industry R&D establishments. It is well equipped with state-of-the-art labs for seed health, molecular biology, cytogenetics, pathology, entomology, molecular virology and plant transformation. Mahyco has made substantial investment in R&D to be able to produce superior products to meet customer needs.

Mahyco has developed a fruit and shoot borer resistant eggplant under a public private partnership program. Mahyco has also received the GEAC approval to export transgenic eggplant seeds to the Philippines and Bangladesh provided these germplasm were initially brought from these countries only.

Mahyco is close to achieving success in launching insect-tolerant food and vegetables that would help in making available qualitative and nutritious food available to India's fast growing population at cheaper rate. In this regard Mahyco has completed extensive animal testing studies and food and feed safety studies in laboratories with fruit and shoot borer (FSB) as part of the regulatory requirements. These studies have shown encouraging results to develop a technology for insect-tolerant brinjal and rice crops.

The production, processing and packaging of seeds at Mahyco are done as per stringent quality assurance norms. The ISO 9001-2000 certification awarded to Mahyco is the largest multilocation certification in India covering 59 locations. Mahyco's Quality Assurance laboratory at Dawalwadi (INML-06) has been granted the status of Member Laboratory of the International Seed Testing Association (ISTA), Zurich, Switzerland since 1999 and the status of ISTA accredited Laboratory since April 2005. Mahyco also received a national award for biotech product commercialization from the Indian government in 2003.

Besides being strong in research and development, Mahyco has established a very strong network of more than 1,00,000 farmers in 30 production centers of India. It has an all India marketing network of more than 5,000 sales outlets. To bring awareness about the advantages of new technology, it has been organsing farmers' mela at different places. In association with Pune-based Ranade Micronutrients, Mahyco organized farmers' mela for good cultivation of Mahyco Bollgard cotton.