

## **PRIVATE SECTOR INITIATIVES IN LONG AND EXTRA LONG STAPLE COTTON IN INDIA:**

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The nineties and the post-millennium period witnessed a welcome development of the private seed companies, playing an active role in contributing their might in increasing cotton production in the country.

### **Constraints in ELS Cotton Production**

The major problem with regard to long and extra long staple cotton varieties and hybrids in India is that these varieties are cultivated in varied agro-climatic conditions including rainfed situations, which lead to the variation in fibre quality attributes.

Improvement of *G.barbadense* cotton should be viewed in terms of seed cotton yield, ginning percentage and earliness. Variety Suvin has the longest duration of 210 days, low ginning out turn of 29 per cent and average lint yield of Suvin across locations in India when compared to *hirsutum* hybrids and varieties are the lowest and the offered higher price of *barbadense* does not adequately cover the cost of production. Increased productivity in *barbadense* cotton should collectively address the problem of earliness, higher ginning outturn and seed cotton yield. Research efforts are needed to increase seed cotton yield, ginning out turn and to increase the fibre quality. Attempts should be made to use molecular markers to identify quantitative trait loci (QTL) governing fibre quality characters, map them and introduce them into a wide variety of populations through Marker Assisted Selection (MAS).

### **Role of Private Sector**

Development and release of interspecific Bt cotton hybrids opens up new avenues for increasing the ELS production in the country. Ever since three Bt cotton hybrids have been approved for commercial cultivation in India during 2002, there was a sharp increase in area under cultivation of such Bt cotton hybrids from a mere 38038 ha in 2002–03 to 3.8 m.ha in 2006-07 which accounts for 41% of the cotton area of India and it was 0.3 m.ha higher than Bt cotton area in China (3.5 m.ha). List of Bt cotton hybrids of private sector belonging to both long and extra long staple categories approved so far for commercial cultivation in different cotton growing zones are given in Annexure I.

In recent years (2000-2006) new interspecific hybrid cottons like MRC 6918 Bt (MAHYCO), JKCHB Chamundi (J K Agri Genetics), SARA-2 (Super Spinning), SIMA/HB3 (SIMA-CDRA), Nav Bharat Kranthi and RCHB 708 Bt (Rasi Seeds) have been released, opening the way for increasing the production of ELS cotton.

RASI SEEDS (P) LTD Attur has strong breeding programme for developing ELS cotton through interspecific breeding programme involving H X B and has



developed some very promising BG II hybrids which are under regulatory testing. The fibre parameters of the hybrids are furnished below.

Hybrids	Ginning Outturn (%)	Fibre Length (mm)	Fibre Strength(g/tex)	Micronaire
RCHB 711 BG II	31.9	36.2	29.3	3.1
RCHB 717 BG II	31.6	38.3	34.6	3.2
RCHB 720 BG II	31.8	37.1	31.4	3.4
RCHB 625	30.2	38.1	33.7	3.3

The interest and initiative taken by the private sector seed companies for developing ELS Cotton of superior quality faced a set back due to the threats posed to ELS cotton segment.

- a) Market distortions due to continued imports from (indirectly) subsidized cotton producing countries.
- b) Tariff policy changes and competition from man-made fibres, which are being improved to equal the natural advantages of cotton.
- c) Growing market shares of China and Pakistan in ELS cotton textile varieties.

Policy initiatives should have to be in place for addressing the threats to ELS cotton so that the private sector can accelerate their research programmes for the development of ELS cotton with superior quality that can match the quality parameters of Pima, Giza etc.

### CONCLUSION:

The area, production and productivity of ELS cotton could be substantially improved if the following suggestions are critically analyzed and strategies are developed to address the various issues that may result in capturing sizeable share of global ELS cotton production by India

- Announcing ELS cotton price taking PIMA price by the USDA as a base price.
- Procuring the excess production by Government at remunerative price or creating a mechanism to procure and export to the needy countries.
- Sharing of elite ELS cotton germplasm available with the public sector with the private sector.
- Developing ELS cotton hybrids having early duration.
- Adopting contract farming for the production of quality ELS cotton.
- Getting government support for contract farming to ensure quality production of Extra Long Staple cotton.

Finally I would like to conclude my presentation by informing all those concerned that public private partnership (PPP) in its true spirit is essentially required to march our country to the status of **Developed country** and in this connection **change in mind set** is absolutely essential wherein the private sector should be considered as a co-operator in the country's agricultural development rather than to view them as competitor for the public sector.

