Brazilian illegal transgenic cotton fields will be destroyed

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SOURCE: Monsanto Watch, USA, by Etienne Vernet
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The Brazilian National Biosafety Commission (CNTBio) decided to destroyed the illegal transgenic cotton plantations

Yesterday, the Brazilian National Biosafety Commission (CNTBio), decided to recommend the chemical and mecanical destruction of the illegal transgenic cotton plantations in addition to a field survey for a period of six months of the fields where the crop will be destroyed.

The Ministry of Agriculture (MA) had informed the National Biosafety Commission that it had prohibited the cultivation of sixteen thousand hectares of plantations sowed with smuggled GE cotton seeds in more more than twenty exploitations in the States of Mato Grosso, Goias, Bahia, Mato Grosso do Sul and Minas Gerais. The MA estimates that this year total surface of "authorized“ GE cotton will be of two hundred thousand hectares.

=46or the moment, the only transgenic cotton variety authorized by the CNTBio is the Bollgard from the multinational Monsanto which is resistant to the insects. However, since the month of May of this year, the services of the MA have detected, others Bollgard varieties as well as Round Ready ones, also produced by the americian multinational.

The destruction of the illegal cotton fields will be carried out by application of a drying chemical and gridding of all the crops found on the fields that will then be incorporated in the organic material of the soil.

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Monsanto revised the value of the soy royalties over the grain harvested

SOURCE: Monsanto Watch, USA, by Etienne Vernet
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Monsanto revised the value of the royalties that will have to be paid by producers of Mato grosso do Sul.

After several months of negotiations with representatives of soy cooperatives, Monsanto revised the value of the royalties that will have to be paid by producers for this year harvest season.

Monsanto responded to the demands of the producers of the State of Mato Grosso do Sul who expressed their concerns over the value of the indemnization for the use of the Round up Ready technology in fields planted with illegal transgenic soy seeds in this State, following a very good productivity during this harvest season.

Nowadays, Monsanto has implemented a mix mechanism for the collection of its royalties, by which a producer who buys a certified RR seed has to pay a royalty of thirty five cents per kilo or approximately fourteen US$ for a bag of 40 kilos, this value has not been addressed by the negotiations. On the other a producer who has planted illegal transgenic RR seeds or seeds coming from past harvests had to pay an indemnization equal to 2% of the value of the soy harvested. This is on this amount that the negotiations took place.

Until now, Monsanto had stipulated production averages for each State, based on the productivity of conventional soy of the last seven years. This estimation being the basis of calculation for the amount of grain a producer, that has bought certified RR seeds, is allowed to commercialise. By doing this, Monsanto makes sure that any producer that goes beyond its credit of production is forced to pay the indemnization when selling its production.

Following negotiations the indemnization that the producers of the State of Mato Grosso do Sul will have to paid will be similar to the one of the producers of the State of Mato Grosso.

For Mato Grosso do Sul Monsanto had stipulated an average of 71 kilos for each kilo of seeds used, which is equal to a productivity of 4 260 kilos per hectare. Now, Monsanto has increased this average to 74 kilos or 4 440 kilos per hectare.

According to the Federation of Agriculture of the State of Mato Grosso do Sul (Famasul), for each 74 kilos of transgenic grain harvested, the producer will have to pay an indemnization equal to the price of one kilo of seed. Therefore, the negotiations resulted in a saving over 180 kilos of soy per hectare per producer, which will be exempted from the indemnization tax. A loss of profits evaluated at several millions of dollars for the multinational.

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Brazil GMO crackdown seen leading to $30m in cotton losses

SAO PAULO - The discovery of illegal Monsanto (MON) transgenic cotton plants on roughly 18,000 hectares of Brazilian cotton farms caused a quarantine of those fields by federal authorities this week and will likely amount to $30 million in losses, according to Brazil's Cotton Producers Association, or Abrapa.

"Farmers are more than a bit worried. Some say that they didn't know the plants were GMO," said Abrapa President Joao Carlos Jacobsen about the prohibited Roundup Ready Flex Cotton, a genetically modified cotton seed that helps control the spread of weeds.

Abrapa estimates that 6,400 metric tons of cotton will be destroyed as a result. Brazil's government only allows for the planting of Monsanto's Bollgard cotton, another transgenic variety, in a few experimental fields. Bollgard cotton makes the plant more resistant to the boll weevil, one of the most damaging pests to cotton. Twenty properties throughout Brazil's top cotton-producing states were discovered this month to be using transgenic cotton. Government authorities are currently in Goias, the nation's No. 3 producer.

The National Biosecurity Commission, or CTNBio, said farmers would not be permitted to plant cotton on those fields in the 2006-07 crop. That doesn't mean farmers will plant less cotton, however. Most cotton farmers also plant soy and raise cattle, so they could move crops to other fields without reducing output.

Requests for permission to use GMO crops are currently being stalled at CTNBio under various political bottlenecks. CTNBio currently has a backlog of roughly 80 requests for experimental field tests for GMO corn, soy, rice and cotton, among other things.

Abrapa said it will enter talks with the government in the days ahead to reverse a decision by the Agriculture Ministry to destroy the plants. Most farmers, including cotton producers, are currently facing heavy debt burdens and will be unable to handle additional losses, Jacobsen said.

The government has already announced two emergency farm aid packages in the last two months in response to the farm crisis.

Brazilian cotton producers buy transgenic seeds illegally from Paraguay and Argentina, where the Monsanto brands are legally sold, Jacobsen said.

A director at a cotton industry association said, on the condition of anonymity, that at least 25% of Brazil's cotton crop was GMO cotton. "I talk to so many farmers every day and they all tell me that they are experimenting with the seeds. I think they'll bite the bullet this year, but I'm certain they will plant more again next year. They can't afford to keep spending all this money on agrotoxins," the source said.

Cash crunches on Brazilian cotton farms led to a 20% reduction in the 2005-06 cotton crop. Brazil produced 2.7 million metric tons in the 2005-06 crop, compared to 3.4 million in 2004-05. Planted area was reduced by 28% nationwide to 845,300 hectares, and as much as 49% in mid-
sized producer states like Mato Grosso do Sul. Production yields for lint cotton have improved and some farm groups thank GMO for that, hitting 1,238 kilograms per hectare in the 2005-06 crop compared to 1,101 kilograms in the 2004-05 season. Total lint cotton production for 2005-06 will fall 19.4% to 1 million tons, according to figures from the National Commodities Supply Corp., or Conab, because of reduction in planted area.

"Farmers are desperate. These seeds save them at least $250 a hectare," said Andrew MacDonald, president of the Brazil Cotton Association, or Abrag. Brazil is the No. 4 cotton exporter, trailing China, the U.S. and India.

"India was a net importer of cotton until they introduced Bollgard cotton, now they are exporting and are on their way to becoming a textile powerhouse. Their farmers don't spend as much on pesticides as Brazilians do," MacDonald said.

"I can understand the environmental concerns regarding cross pollination of GMO cotton with traditional cotton. But I don't see how spraying more and more pesticide into the soil and water table is a better alternative," MacDonald said.

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