Biosafety News

STUDY: GM CROPS CAN HELP PRESERVE AGROBIODIVERSITY

During the green revolution, farmers replaced a large number of landraces with a small number of high-yielding varieties. There are concerns that such erosion of varietal diversity could be further aggravated through the widespread use of GM crops. In a recent study, Vijesh Krishna from the University of Goettingen and colleagues showed that GM technology can actually help to preserve agrobiodiversity, because GM traits can be introduced into a large number of varieties. The researchers developed a general framework, which they applied to the case of Bt cotton in India. They showed that Bt reduced varietal diversity in the early adoption phase, when only a small number of Bt varieties were approved. Yet this trend was reversed when the approval process was facilitated and the seed market became more competitive. Cotton varietal diversity in India, with 95% adoption of Bt, is now at the same level than it was before the introduction of GM technology.

The results were published in the *European Review of Agricultural Economics*.