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The International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) released a discussion paper Bt-cotton and Farmers' Suicides in India: Reviewing the Evidence.

The report is manipulative of the truth about farmers suicides and Bt-cotton at every level.

Firstly, it states that Farmers suicides is a long-term phenomena, and the long term is 1997-2007. Ten years is not a long term in a 10,000 year old farming tradition. And 1997 is precisely when the suicides take on an epidemic proportion due to seed monopolies, initially through hybrids and from 2002 through Bt Hybrids.

Secondly, the chronology of Bt-cotton introduction is false. The story begins with Monsanto's illegal Bt trials, not with commercialisation in 2002.

Secondly, the report states that In specific regions and years, where Bt-cotton may have indirectly contributed to farmer indebtedness (via crop failure) leading to suicides, its failure was mainly the result of the context or environment in which it was introduced or planted; Bt-cotton as a technology is not to blame.

This is an interesting argument. A technology is always developed in the context of local socioeconomic and ecological conditions. A technology that is a misfit in a context is a failed technology for that context. You cannot blame the context to save a failed technology.

The technology of engineering Bt-genes into cotton was aimed primarily at controlling pests. However, new pests have emerged in Bt-cotton, leading to higher use of pesticides. In Vidharbha region of Maharashtra, which has the highest suicides, the area under Bt-cotton has increased from 0.200 million ha in 2004 to 2.880 million ha in 2007. Costs of pesticides for farmers has increased from Rs. 921

152 million to Rs. 13,264 billion in the same period, which is a 13 fold increase. A pest control technology that fails to control pests might be good for seed corporations which are also agrichemical corporations. For farmers it translates into suicide.

The IFPRI study uses industry data to falsely claim reduction of pesticide use in Bt-cotton when the empirical data and ground reality shows pesticide use increase.

There are alternatives to Bt-cotton and toxic pesticides. Through Navdanya we have promoted Organic Farming and Seeds of Hope, to help farmers move away from Monsanto's Seeds of Suicide.

The field data of Bt-cotton is also manipulated when cotton yields are shown as low in the pre-Btcotton years, it is not mentioned that cotton has traditionally not been grown as a monoculture but as a mixed crop. Converting biodiversity to monocultures of course leads to increase in yield of the monoculture, but this is accompanied by a decline in production at the biodiversity level.

The IFPRI paper has attempted to play with figures, just like the investment bankers and hedge fund managers played with figures and caused the collapse of Wall Street. Manipulation of reality with numbers does not make for truth. In the case of seeds, it is threatening farmers' lives.