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## Pakistan

## Biotechnology

## Pakistan and Monsanto Sign Letter of Intent 2008

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**Report Highlights:**

Pakistan and Monsanto have signed a Letter of Intent (LOI) for extending mutual cooperation in agricultural biotechnology. The initial focus will be to develop genetically engineered cotton suitable for Pakistan's agronomic conditions, followed by other crops with a variety of traits.

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Includes PSD Changes: No  
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## **GOP and Monsanto Sign Letter of Intent**

On May 13, 2008, the Government of Pakistan's (GOP) Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Livestock (MINFAL) signed a Letter of Intent (LOI) with Monsanto to begin mutual cooperation in advanced transgenic technology. The cabinet-level Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) authorized MINFAL to sign this agreement in technical collaboration in agricultural biotechnology with Monsanto with the intent of expanding and improving the quality of Pakistan's troubled cotton crop.

Monsanto will utilize its commercialized product Bollgard (event **MON531**) and other cotton technology in Pakistan in an as-yet-to-be-determined financial arrangement. The LOI extends to other commercial crops as well including corn, soybeans and vegetables.

Sources indicated that enactment of the Plant Breeders Rights Bill 2008 and the Seed (Amendment) Bill 2008 by the parliament were also discussed at the ECC meeting. The failure to pass these bills into law is viewed as a major obstacle in the development of genetically engineered crops for Pakistan. At the May 13 meeting, the ECC also recommended promulgation of these two bills by the President of Pakistan.

## **Establishment of Consultative and Steering Committees**

Now that the LOI has been signed, the GOP and Monsanto are in the process of selecting members for two committees: a Consultative Committee and a Steering Committee. The Consultative Committee is responsible for developing an initial work plan, proposing future cooperative agreements, joint preparation of outlines covering goals and objectives, work plans for research methodologies and procedures and establishing milestones for achievement. That committee will also deliberate on finalization of modalities of compensation/royalties to Monsanto for its technology. The Steering Committee will be a governing body with responsibility for all aspects of the LOI.

## **Agreement is a Major Development for Pakistan Agriculture**

Pakistani farmers, scientists, ginners, the textile industry and policymakers have hailed this agreement as a major development towards enhancing cotton productivity in Pakistan. Cotton production has steadily declined over the past four years, dropping from 14.3 million bales in 2004/05 to 11.3 million bales in 2007/08. Meanwhile, Pakistan's close neighbors, India and China, have achieved significant increases in cotton production based on collaboration with Monsanto in biotech cotton varieties.

The farm community of Pakistan is fully supportive of biotech cotton as evidenced by the fact that at least 40 percent of last year's cotton crop was planted to illegal/unapproved Bt cotton. The figure will likely double for this year's cotton crop.

## **Biosafety System and Related Developments**

Pakistan maintains a large infrastructure of 29 state-owned biotech research centers. Biosafety mechanisms are in place to monitor and evaluate applications for products of genetic engineering. Monsanto has submitted an application to the National Biosafety Committee of the GOP's Environmental Protection Agency to allow the import of Bt cotton hybrids from India. The request is expected to be approved. Moreover, Monsanto Pakistan also requested permission to begin field trials of hybrids of Bt cotton during the current crop season (2008-09) for fast-track evaluation and adoption in Pakistan.

In addition to Monsanto's application, the U.S. biotech company DuPont/Pioneer Hi-Bred has submitted to Pakistan authorities an application for their hybrid GM corn "Hercules."

### Agriculture the Domain of Provinces

Under the Constitution of Pakistan, major responsibility for most agricultural issues is assigned at the provincial level. Consequently, there is constant confusion between Federal and Provincial governments on the biotech issue.

The Government of the Punjab – within which 80 percent of total cotton area lies – has established two provincial committees to handle biotech issues. One committee is responsible for issues related to Monsanto while the other handles negotiations with Chinese biotech companies.

### OTHER RELEVANT REPORTS

REPORT #	SUBJECT	DATE SUBMITTED
PK7029	<a href="#">Agricultural Biotechnology Report</a>	11/25/2007
PK8002	<a href="#">MY 2008/09 Cotton Outlook</a>	02/04/2008
PK8001	<a href="#">Cotton Update: 2007/08 Crop Production Reviewed</a>	01/15/2008
PK7010	<a href="#">Cotton &amp; Products Annual 2007</a>	05/23/2007

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