Perceptions of Karnataka farmers on insect pests and pest management practices in Bt. cotton

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SUMMARY

This study was undertaken with the purpose of examining the various factors involved in the adoption of Bt. cotton, source of Bt. cotton seeds purchase and mainly to evaluate farmers’ know how on Bt. technology and perception on insect pests and disease incidence and their management practices in Bt. cotton in Karnataka, India. A total of 500 Bt. cotton growing farmers were interviewed in the cotton belt of Karnataka through a questionnaire. Drastic reduction in damage due to bollworms, fewer pesticide interventions, reduced labour and higher yield and profit seems to be the main factors responsible for large scale adoption of Bt. cotton. Local market and seed companies found to be the major source of Bt. cotton seed while some farmers in certain locations go for illegal Bt. cotton seeds due to their availability at cheap rate and also on credit. The present study revealed that farmers were aware of the major bollworm pests and expressed low to nil incidence of bollworms (Helicoverpa armigera, Earias vitella, Pectinophora gossypiella,) and gradual increase in incidence of Spodoptera litura and sucking pests (Thrips tabaci, Amrasca devastans and Aphis gossypii) in Bt. cotton. Farmers also observed the incidence of new secondary pests, the cotton mealybug (Phenacoccus sp.), cotton mirid bug (Creontiodes biseratense), shoot weevil(Alcidodes affaber) that caused moderate to severe damage to the crop in most of the cotton-growing districts. Farmers knew little about natural enemies and diseases in their fields, but reported a high incidence of cotton leaf reddening.

Key words : Bt cotton, I.P.M., Pest management practices, Pests and diseases, Perception

Received :
February, 2011
Accepted :
July, 2011

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