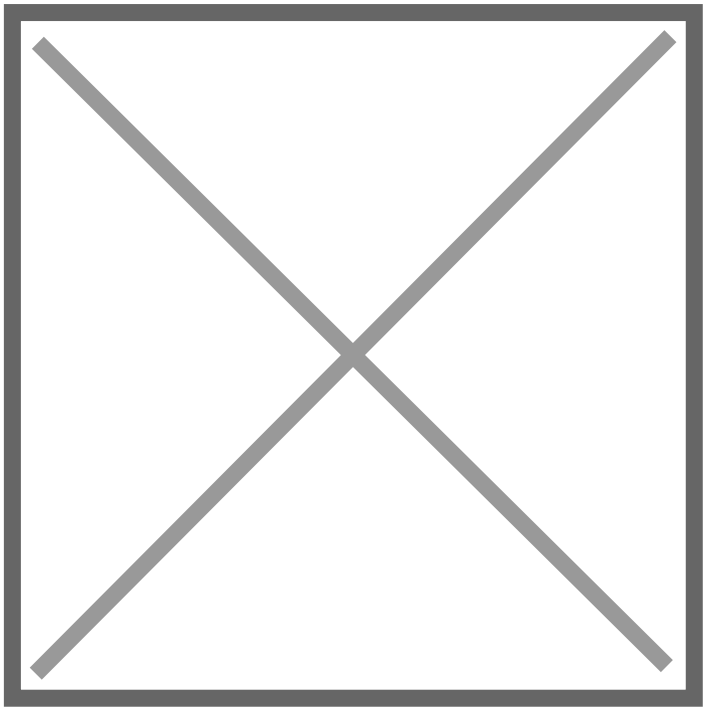
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Trading se le ke Technology Sharing tak

10 February 2003 | News



With a vision Ã¢â?¬Å?Abundant Food and a Healthy EnvironmentÃ¢â?¬? and having its presence in India for over 50 years, Monsanto India Ltd was anxiously waiting for the day. It was 26 March 2002. The genetic engineering approval committee(GEAC), department of environment and forestry, Government of India has finally approved for the commercialization of the country's first biotech crop, insect protected Bt (Bacillius thuringiensis) cotton, which was developed by Mahyco Monsanto Biotech (India) Ltd a 50:50 joint venture between Maharashtra Hybrid Seeds Company (Mahyco) Ltd and Monsanto.

The process of developing and conducting field trials for Bt cotton took over a decade. In the litmus test the Mahyco Monsanto Biotech (India) Ltd's three Bt cotton varieties -- MECH 12 Bt, MECH 184 Bt, MECH 162-- Bt showed good results and emerged with flying colors. This has paved a way for Monsanto India to look ahead in the plant biotechnology in India.

Monsanto in India

Milestones

1949: Monsanto kicked off its activities in India as a trading company

1973: Machete, the first rice herbicide was launched

1991: Roundup, a general weed controller, was launched to provide solution to plantation growers

1990s: Mahyco approached Monsanto for Bt technology sharing

1997: Monsanto entered into a strategic alliance with Mahyco

1998: Leader, a new generation herbicide, was launched in for post-emergent weed control in wheat

1998: DBT approves Mahyco-Monsanto to conduct Bt cotton trials.

2000: Monsanto integrated all its agricultural business activities in India

2002: In 29 March, a joint venture with Mahyco, Monsanto launched India's first GM crop-- Bollgard Bt cotton.

Monsanto India Ltd, a subsidiary of the US based Monsanto Company has been operating in India for 50 years. Seeing the vast market for their range of products in India's agrarian society, it started as a trading company in 1949. Moving on to seed production, the company has been providing farmers with products that have contributed substantially to agricultural productivity and crop management practices for the past 25 years,.

Monsanto India with its commitment of adopting best global practices of corporate governance has made a significant milestone in the Indian agriculture sector.

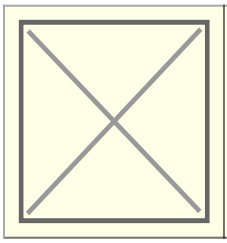
Sekhar Natarajan, managaing director, Monsanto India Ltd, says, Ã¢â?¬Å?Monsanto is committed to work with the appropriate government/statutory authorities to develop useful technologies through local institutions and companies, in full compliance with the country's laws and safeguards. We believe in working with and co-operating closely with the public and private sectors and research institutions to ensure the farmer's right to choose the most appropriate technologies, to boost yields in keeping with the principles of sustainable development.Ã¢â?¬?

In 2000, Monsanto integrated all its agricultural business in India, making itself a comprehensive agriculture inputs provider. Its main areas of strength are herbicides, seeds and traits with a focus on four key crops Ã¢â?¬â?? rice, wheat, cotton and maize. The company has developed unique solutions and products to help farmers to enhance yields and improve environmental quality in a sustainable way.

Having its corporate office at Mumbai and research center at Bangalore, Monsanto strives to provide quality, cost-effective and integrated approaches for improving farm productivity to produce better quality foods, strictly adhering to stringent standards for eco-care and safety. Monsanto has many revolutionary products and technological breakthroughs in the agricultural sciences to its credit.

On Biotech in India

Sekhar Natarajan of Monsanto says, Ã¢â?¬Å?the prospect for biotechnology in India is very bright. A large number of organizations, both public and private are engaged in cutting edge research in India, many of whom is in the early process of commercialization. In combination with the existing agricultural practices, agricultural biotechnology will have a huge impact on the agricultural productivity of the country and its economy.Ã¢â?¬?



Ã¢â?¬Å?With the existing agriculture practices, the agricultural biotechnology will have
a huge impact on the agriculture productivity in India and its economyÃ¢â?¬?,

says Sekhar Natarajan, managing director , Monsanto India Ltd

Modern biotechnology, if used responsibly, can advance India's agriculture to address the challenge of feeding its increasing population with limited economic, land, and water resources. Crop damage can be minimised through disease and pest resistant varieties, which will also reduce the use of chemicals.

However, he says, Ã¢â?¬Å?since biotechnology is new to the country, it is necessary to educate the public about this technology. Public must be made aware of its benefits. This needs to be initiated by the government as well as other players in the field through a variety of mediums ranging from scientific seminars to inclusion of related topics in school curricula.Ã¢â?¬?

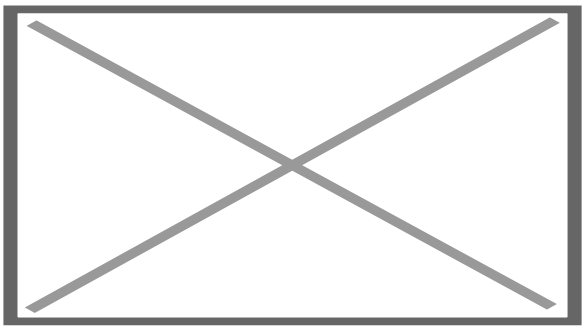
Establishing its mark

Monsanto through its different product strengths and its humsafar goal has made remarkable achievement in terms of market capitalization in India in the last five years.

Monsanto's humsafar goal has provided small holders a one-stop total solutions package to increase crop value in terms of yield and better prices for their produce. It also provided education on better agronomic and farm management practices, thereby increasing the profitability of the small farmers. This has helped them to reach the larger audience in the Indian agriculture sector.

Monsanto India has made a significant achievement in the last five years, from a market capitalization of Rs 132 crore in 1999-98 to Rs 459 crore in 2001-02. Besides its domestic market the company has also focussed on the export front. Nearly 15 percent of its sales revenue comes from exports.

The company has doubled its export volume to Rs 49 crore in 2001-02 from Rs 25 crore during the previous year. Monsanto exports seeds, especially maize to South-East Asia (Indonesia, the Philippines and Thailand). They earned Rs 42 crore in foreign exchange through seed export during 2001-02.



Product scenario

Monsanto's work in India began soon after independence. As a committed participant in the seed industry, it has come up with hybrid and high-yielding crop varieties of corn, sunflower and cotton.

Monsanto launched Machete, the first rice herbicide in India in 1973, and has revolutionized rice cultivation in the country since then. At the same time it also launched Lasso for weed control in vegetables and soybeans which still continues to be a leading weed control tool for soybean farmers in western India. Its Roundup has been providing plantation growers with a leading-edge weed control solution since 1991. Roundup has gone on to become an important weed control product for large and small scale farmers, throughout India. Leader, a new generation herbicide, was launched in 1998 for post-emergent weed control in wheat.

Through its field operations, knowledge of agricultural production and constant search for new agricultural solutions and technologies, Monsanto seeks to develop, communicate and provide sustainable solutions to Indian farmers.

Social responsibilities

In a country like India, where the rising population, natural calamities like floods, and drought due to poor monsoon have pushed the private sector to take up social responsibilities. As Monsanto is into agrisector, it has felt the necessity of funding the research organizations that aim at identifying genes capable of making crops drought tolerant. In 2001-02 Monsanto has granted the first installment of $24,000 to the University of Agricultural Sciences, Bangalore, out of committed $40,000 for the two-year project.

In addition to funding the agri-research organization, Monsanto also runs some community outreach initiatives. Ã¢â?¬Å?Monsanto VidyarthiÃ¢â?¬? is a programme for educating children. Other projects include training farmers with smallholdings on agricultural techniques under the banner of Ã¢â?¬Å?VanaraiÃ¢â?¬?, which improves their crop productivity and preserves the environment.

Future of Monsanto India

With all the hurdles they came across, Monsanto is still in action and will continue to remain committed to Indian agriculture sector by providing unique solutions and products to the farmers that will help them to enhance agricultural yields and improve environment quality in a sustainable way. Sekhar Natarajan emphasises that the company will continue to focus on its areas of strength, the core businesses of herbicide, seeds, and traits as it concentrate on key crops--rice, wheat, cotton and maize.

Narayan Kulkarni