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Desi or BT cotton? Farmers in dilemma

DEEPENDER DESWAL
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Farmers are in a dilemma whether to go for cotton damaged by whiteflies last year or prefer other crop.

After the whitefly attack on cotton, farmers are wary of sowing cotton, especially the American varieties locally called "narma" which has been popular among farmers.

Some farmers have opted for desi cotton not prone to whitefly attack and some claimed they have not been advised properly about varieties and availability of seed.

Harpal Singh, kisan sabha secretary, said: "The state government has formed a joint committee, comprising Vice Chancellors of agricultural universities in Haryana and Punjab, and the Director of the Central Institute of Cotton Research (CIRC), to probe causes and impact of the whitefly attack."

"Farmers have not been told about the pros and cons of sowing desi and BT cotton. As a result, some farmers have sowed desi cotton. But several

WHITEFLY ATTACK



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Harpal Singh, KISAN SABHA SECRETARY

farmers still have little option, but to sow BT cotton because of availability of seeds and late preparation of the field," said kisan sabha secretary.

Bir Babran farmer Zile Singh sowed cotton on 3 acres last year and got a yield of 1.6 quintals.

"This year, I sowed cot-

ton on 1 acre. I am wary of the whitefly attack, as I have noticed pest in vegetables this season. If dry weather continues, there is a possibility of whitefly attack," he said.

Bhupinder Singh, Director, Agriculture Department, said farmers seemed inclined towards desi cotton and other crops.

Dilip Monga, CICR Director, said the government-constituted committee had submitted a report which recommended shifting to desi cotton from BT variety, and early sowing to avoid whitefly attack. "This time, area under desi cotton has increased."

Haryana Agricultural University (HAU) scientists said they had issued an advisory to farmers to sow desi cotton instead of American cotton.

"We are observing the fields and preparing weekly reports about whitefly attack this time. Whiteflies have been visible at some places, but it's not a threat so far," said an Haryana Agricultural University scientist.

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