

Developed by Monsanto, GMO Eggplant Forced On Developing Countries

Genetically engineered Bt brinjal, thought to ward off pests, is an apparent failure. But that doesn't stop its promotion.

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The introduction of genetically modified eggplant or "[brinjal](#)" as its called in Bangladesh, India, and other places in the East, has been hard to follow here in the U.S. What has [emerged](#) in the U.S. media is mostly cheer leading based on the claims that the GMO brinjal will increase yields and fight malnourishment. This message is applied to the larger one: it's foolish and against science to resist GMOs when they improve human lives.

If only it were true.

Pursuing information on genetically modified brinjal means exploring stories and websites often half a world away. There's little possibility of confirmation and much of the reporting comes from organizations opposed to GMOs. Yet exploring what information there is suggests that GMO eggplant, like GMO food crops generally, isn't going over so well.

The promise of the plant — less insect infestation, higher yields — doesn't seem to be true. In fact, the GMO brinjal seems to be [quite a flop](#). But you wouldn't know that from the *New York Times* opinion piece from a Cornell Alliance for Science researcher linked above.

This [account](#) from Bangladesh tells how agricultural officials came and took down a signboard designating a field of GMO brinjal after it failed. The plants engineered to contain *Bacillus thuringiensis* or Bt, a naturally occurring pesticide, failed to mature and were attacked by other borers and insects that seemed unscathed by Bt.

The Bangladeshi farmer, whose GMO field was one of four that reporters found had failed, said he would be growing local plants from now on and demanded to know why he'd been used as a guinea pig.

According to the European Union's GMO Risk Assessment and Communication of Evidence (GRACE) organization, the [GMO eggplant or "aubergine"](#) as it's known, was developed by Monsanto and field tested here in the U.S. But the major push has been to promote the genetically engineered eggplant in developing countries where it's a central crop. In addition to Bangladesh, this includes India and the Philippines.

So far, none of the countries have approved the GMO. The Philippines halted the push to allow the genetically engineered eggplant to be grown when it [ruled](#) that the fruit had not been proven safe for human consumption. (That ruling has since [been appealed](#).)

The GMO fields in Bangladesh were part of field trials conducted by the Bangladesh Agriculture Research Institute. The Institute reported that it had given Bt brinjal saplings to farmers for 20 fields. Of the 20, 13 failed.

If all this plays out to be true, it would be a tremendous blow to pro-GMO forces. That a crop designed to ward off certain pests is attacked and destroyed by that and other pests is a tremendous fail. It's also a tremendous lie to keep promoting the product as if it was pest resistant when it's apparently not.

No doubt, it's convenient for global agricultural interests to push their genetically mutated products on places in the world where the U.S. and other developed countries don't pay all that much attention. Here's to local activists across the globe, in both developed and developing countries, that are paying attention and standing up to big agriculture's agenda. Let's not let them get away with anything.

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