

Mali farmers don't want GM crops

Mali farmers say they don't want trials of genetically modified crops to begin in their nation -- the fourth poorest country in the world.

The decision came following the first African "farmers' jury" to debate the issue, The Independent reported Tuesday. During the five-day meeting arguments for and against GM crop technology were presented.

The meeting was held in southern Mali, where two-thirds of the nation's cotton is produced and where attacks by bollworm have destroyed large swaths of cotton crops during recent years, the newspaper said.

Biotechnology scientists claim to be able to produce an insect-repellent cotton crop that would survive attacks by bollworm, but environmentalists say GM crops benefits are outweighed by the harm farmers would face.

"GM technology gives seed companies power over the entire agricultural sector," said Michel Pimbert, director of the London-based International Institute for Environment and Development, which organized the meeting.

Farmers said they are also worried new GM technology would damage their way of life. One farmer said he feared GM farming would marginalize "the mutual help and cooperation among farmers and our social and cultural life."

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