Preface

Controversial reports from a wide section of the society regarding the benefits and harmful effects of the introduction of first genetically modified crop Bt cotton in India including Maharashtra gets prominent space in the media. On the other hand the suicides of cotton cultivating farmers in southern parts of India including Maharashtra also keeps coming and the plight of the farmers cultivating Bt cotton hovers the pages of local and national press. These controversies prompted the researcher to look in to the matter of Bt cotton cultivation in northern Maharashtra. In this novel study involving survey, laboratory and field research on the socio-economic impact of Bt cotton cultivation on the farmers of Nandurbar, Dhule and Jalgaon districts of Maharashtra sincere efforts are made to get insight of the present and future problems that the farmers are and will encounter.

Various Government agencies would like us to believe that the cultivation of Bt cotton has indeed improved the socio-economic conditions of the farmers and the cotton production in the country has gone up due to its introduction. Various non-governmental organizations (NGO’s) cry foul play without conducting proper research. Farmers in Gujarat and other parts of the country have gained from the technology today but they had faced problem with the varieties introduced earlier and there was release of Bollguard-II indicating that all was not well with the Bollguard I the variety released earlier.

Large scale suicide of the farmers cultivating cotton in Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra continued even after the introduction of Bt cotton varieties and claims and counter claims of the seed producing companies and the NGO’s did not give respite to the farmers. Absence of effective machinery to control the sale of spurious seeds and pesticides in absence of help form financial instates distributing small loans add to the havoc of farmers. Occurrence of new diseases, increased incidences of sucking pests and other factors added to the cost of cultivation and reduced the yield.
Under above mentioned conditions a sincere effort is made to conduct a comparative study on socio-economic and environmental impact of cultivation of Bt cotton varieties in tribal populated Nandurbar, Dhule and Jalgaon the tribal districts of north Maharashtra. By the time this thesis was presented two of the respondents to the present study had committed suicide. The study includes socio-economic profile of the farmers, their land holding and sources of irrigation, agronomical practices followed for cotton cultivation, incidences of diseases and pests and their control, cost of cultivation, impact on soil microflora and impact on the nutritional status of the soils on which Bt cotton was cultivated. The results obtained from Bt cotton cultivating farmers on various parameters including the above mentioned parameters were compared with non Bt cotton cultivating farmers of the same villages. Suggestions to the farmers and recommendations to the Government are provided at the end of the work.