

The GMO-Suicide Myth

Written by Australian Business
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DALLAS, Jan. 17, 2014 /PRNewswire-USNewswire/ -- Opponents of the use of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) in agriculture frequently report that the failure of this technology is responsible for an alarming number of suicides among farmers in India, but in the Winter 2014 edition of

Issues in Science and Technology

journalist

Keith Kloor

reveals that there is no evidence to support this claim. Major newspaper and TV reports regularly cite the assertion that the failure of Monsanto's genetically engineered cotton seeds are the reason that 250,000 Indian farmers have taken their own lives, allegedly because they are overwhelmed by debt resulting from disappointing harvests. Kloor finds that Indian cotton production has increased more than 65% since the introduction of the Monsanto seeds, that 90% of Indian farmers are purchasing the new seeds, that suicide rates among Indian farmers are not inordinately high for that country, and that the most common causes of suicide are social, interpersonal, and family problems.

Elsewhere in the issue, security analyst Bruce Berkowitz reports that we will soon see a rapid expansion of the use of maritime drones. Technological progress is making it possible to use drones for mine clearing, anti-submarine warfare, missile launching, and harbor policing as well as environmental monitoring and oceanography research. Berkowitz warns that these new activities will raise contentious policy concerns about activities in territorial waters.

In another story about the military, Brad Allenby and Mark Hagerott recommend the revival of the draft to prevent the nation's high-tech military from becoming too isolated from the rest of the public. Also in this issue,

William A. Stiles, Jr.

, shows that the ability of the nation to prepare for the more-severe storms likely to result from climate change depends on the actions taken by local communities and warns that these local decision-makers often make their choices with too little scientific information and too much influence from short-term economic interests.

Other articles question the reliability of the computer models that are becoming far more common in science/policy debates and raise concerns about the increase in greenhouse gas

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emissions resulting from international transport activities.

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