

Pushing Gene Tech Into Farms

Gene transformation is useful in industry and the research lab, but it is also immensely useful in agriculture to create plants with specific traits like insect resistance, high nutrition content, resistance to drought and so on. Despite the continued opposition to transgenic crops, agricultural scientists around the world are convinced that transgenic crops are here to stay in agriculture. But the technology can be used more effectively if the process can be speeded up. This is what Bhubaneswar-based Visargha Agri Sciences hope to do, and it hopes to provide services to Indian and overseas companies.

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Incubated at KIIT, Visargha uses a technique that is known but not yet used in plant biotechnology. The trick is to do away with an old technique that is common in the industry to figure out whether a cell has got the new gene or not. In this method scientists transfer a set of genes for antibiotic resistance along with those with the desired trait. They can then test for the antibiotic-resistant genes in the plant, with the assumption that both sets of genes are transferred together. Scientists then delete the antibiotic-resistant genes in a time-consuming process. Visargha's new technique avoids the antibiotic-resistant genes, and so shortens the time to develop a new trait.



VISARGHA AGRICULTURAL SCIENCES

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