

Are Genetically Engineered Foods Safe?

Fresh food markets which bring us the bounty from summer gardens are springing up around Evergreen. The taste of a newly picked cucumber, red juicy tomatoes and fresh lettuce and spinach has come to signify healthy foods. Yet some would say our foods from the garden may be becoming dangerous to our body systems.

Take the case of the strawberries that were injected with the genes from the Flounder fish to prevent them from freezing. A young boy in Alaska ate the genetically engineered berries and died. He was severely allergic to seafood.

Recently on the national news stories relating the European Union's reluctance to trade with the U.S. citing the dangers they feel exist in our genetically altered foods. They do not want to allow our food products into their countries for health reasons.

With all this hullabaloo going on in the trade markets do we even know what we are fighting about. What exactly is genetic engineering and what are the scientific studies that guarantee the safety of these foods?

For many years farmers have used the natural process of cross breeding closely related species of plants in order to develop hybrids with certain desired traits. Genetic engineering takes the process out of the fields and into the laboratory by allowing scientists to cut out genes or bits of living organism's DNA and splice them into totally unrelated species. For the past five years, Biotechnology companies have been selling U.S. farmers genetically altered foods some would say without proper safeguards because of inadequate long term testing.

Here in the west with our concerns for the native weeds taking over such as knapweed or leafy spurge, we may be heading for infestations by "super weeds". According to information provided by Greenpeace magazine, these weeds could develop in an area where a genetically engineered crop has been planted, the result would be that farmers would have to use more chemicals to control new weeds.

And in addition the genetically engineered crop itself may be difficult to control. In Canada the agric- chemical and biotech company, Zeneca, is marketing a new herbicide to farmers to control the out of control canola which has invaded their fields like a weed but because of the genetic engineering can't be controlled with Roundup.

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