

10 Reasons Why GM Foods Won't Feed the World

We've talked about genetically modified foods in the past, what they are and how to avoid them. Now we're going to discuss the reasons for genetically modified foods and why we don't believe it would work.

According to the companies producing genetically modified seed, their seed should be used to create high crop yields and because it's a better way to fight weeds and insects. Proponents of GMOs claim their use is the only way to feed our ever-growing worldwide population, that traditional methods won't work.

Here are 10 reasons why we believe GMOs will NOT feed the world:

1. Failure to Deliver

Despite the hype, genetic modification consistently fails to live up to industry claims. Only two GM traits have ever made it to market: herbicide resistance and BT toxin expression. Other promises of genetic modification have failed to materialize, including trials with rice, sweet potatoes, and carrots.

2. Costing the Earth

GM crops are costing farmers and governments more money than they are making. In 2003, a report by the Soil Association estimated the cost to the US economy of GM crops at around \$12 billion since 1999, on account of inflated farm subsidies, loss of export orders, and various seed recalls. A study in Iowa found that GM soybeans required all the same costs as conventional farming but, because they produced lower yields, the farmers ended up making no profit at all.

3. Contamination & Gene Escape

No matter how hard you try, you can never be sure that what you are eating is GM-free. In 2006, an analysis of 40 Spanish conventional and organic farms found that eight were contaminated with GM corn varieties, including one farmer whose crop contained 12.6 percent GM plants.

4. Reliance on Pesticides

Far from reducing dependency on pesticides and fertilizers, GM crops frequently increase farmers' reliance on these products. Herbicide-resistant crops can be sprayed indiscriminately with weedkillers such as RoundUp because they are engineered to withstand the effect of the chemical. This means that significantly higher levels of herbicide are found in the final food product.

5. Frankenfoods

Despite the best efforts of the biotech industry, consumers remain staunchly opposed to GM food. In India, farmers' experience of BT cotton has been so disastrous that the government now advises that farmers grow soybeans instead.

6. Breeding Resistance

Nature is smart, and there are already reports of species resistant to GM crops emerging. This is seen in the emergence of new 'superweeds' on farms in North America - plants that have the ability to withstand the industry's chemicals. The superweeds have been created through random crosses between neighboring GM crops and stronger, more toxic herbicides are needed.

7. Creating Problems for Solutions

Many of the so-called 'problems' for which the biotech industry develops 'solutions' seem to be notions of PR rather than science. Herbicide-resistance was sold under the claim that because crops could be doused in chemicals, there would be much less need to weed mechanically or plow the soil, keeping more carbon and nitrates under the surface. But a long-term study by the US Agricultural Research Service has shown that organic farming, even with plowing, stores more carbon than the GM crops save.

8. Health Risks

The results of test on animals exposed to GM crops give serious cause for concern over their safety. In 1998, Scottish scientists found damage to every single internal organ in rats fed blight-resistant GM potatoes. In a 2006 experiment, female rats fed on herbicide-resistant soybeans gave birth to severely stunted pups, of which half died within three weeks. The survivors were sterile.

9. Left Hungry

GM crops have always come with promises of increased yields for farmers, but this is rare. It is now widely accepted that GM soybeans produce consistently lower yields than conventional varieties. Canola crops in Australia and cotton crops in India have also shown lower crop yields with GM seed.

10. Wedded to Fertilizers and Fossil Fuels

No genetically modified crop has yet eliminated the need to chemical fertilizers in order to achieve expected yields. Although industry has made much of the possibility of splicing nitrogen-fixing genes into commercial food crops in order to boost yields, there has so far been little success. This means GM crops are just as dependant on fossil fuels to make fertilizers as conventional agriculture.

Read more at:

http://www.saynotogmos.org/10reasons_feed.pdf and <http://www.organicconsumers.org/ge/tenreasons.cfm>