In 2008, Mark Lynas, an environmental activist, was unsparing in his criticism of genetically-modified(GM) food companies, calling their claims that GM crops could feed the world “outlandish” and dismissing arguments that they could better cope with the impact of climate change “a new line in emotional blackmail”.

The only way of squaring this circle will be through the technology-driven intensification of farming— ie, GM.

Mr Lynas’s speech spotlights a growing tension within the environmental movement over how far to embrace technologies that have environmental benefits, when they work, but which raise fears of environmental disaster if they don’t.

Mr Lynas makes the point that greens are happy to accept scientific findings when it comes to climate change, but dismiss them as biased when they attribute benefits to GM.