# Unit 2 Lecture.mp3

**Speaker1:** [00:00:00] Page 15 Listening for main ideas. A close your book. Listen to the lecture and take notes.

**Speaker2:** [00:00:10] Hi, everybody. How's it going?

**Speaker3:** [00:00:13] Good, thanks. Thanks. Good.

**Speaker2:** [00:00:16] Has everyone turned in their homework? All righty, then. Let's get started. If you remember last week we were discussing some research in the area of genetics. Today I'd like to talk about something I'm sure you've all heard about genetically modified or GM food. Genetically modified food is food either a plant or animal that has been altered in the laboratory by scientists? The scientists take something from one plant or animal and add it to a different plant or animal to make it grow in a different way. Today, we'll look at some of the benefits and the possible risks of genetically modified food. Let's start with a discussion of some of the benefits of GM food. Genetic scientists are really trying to make food plants that are better than normal plants to make plants that are altered in ways that make the plant grow better or taste better or be healthier to eat than normal plants. One benefit is that genetically modified plants may need fewer pesticides than normal plants. For example, there is a type of corn that is bad for insects. When the insects eat the corn plant, they die. However, the corn doesn't hurt people. This type of corn is beneficial because farmers use fewer pesticides to grow the corn, and so there is less pollution in the environment. Also, the corn is less expensive because the farmers don't have to spend a lot of money on pesticides. So by using fewer pesticides, the corn is cheaper and the environment is cleaner. Another benefit of genetically modified plants is that they may grow better than normal plants.

**Speaker2:** [00:02:20] One example is a type of genetically modified strawberry that can grow in cold weather. These are better than normal strawberries because farmers can plant the strawberries earlier in the spring and later in the fall when normal strawberries usually die. So as a result, farmers can grow many more strawberries than they used to. So that's another benefit. Plants that grow better. Finally, a third benefit is that many genetically modified plants stay fresh longer after they are harvested. So, for example, there is a kind of tomato that stays fresh in the store for about two months instead of 1 or 2 weeks. This means that there is more time to get the food to the stores and that stores have more time to sell the food. Less food is thrown away and wasted. So it's a great benefit to have food that stays fresh longer and we can consume more of the food we grow. Now that we've looked at some of the benefits of genetically modified plants, let's talk about the risks of growing this type of food. We don't really know what the harmful effects are, but there are several things that people are worried about. One risk is that the genetically modified plants may start to dominate the other wild plants in the environment. This is a problem with some types of tomatoes. For example, the new tomato plants are stronger than normal plants and because they are stronger and grow faster than the wild plants, the genetically modified tomatoes may start to dominate the environment, causing the wild plants to die.

**Speaker2:** [00:04:13] So having one plant dominate all the other plants isn't good for the environment. Another risk is that genetically modified plants will hurt wild animals and insects in the environment. For example, the genetically modified corn I mentioned earlier has already caused this problem. Now, some butterflies that live near the corn are dying. Butterflies that are good insects and don't eat the corn. It's possible that corn is killing the butterflies somehow, but we're not sure. We just know that more butterflies are dying than normal. But clearly there's a risk that genetically modified foods can hurt animals and insects in the environment. But probably the most important risk is that genetically modified food may be harmful to the people who consume the food. The alterations in the plants may cause serious problems for people. We just don't know. Scientists are trying all kinds of new things, such as putting the genes from animals into a plant, for example, to make a fruit like strawberries stay fresh longer. Scientists took a gene from a fish, a gene that helps the fish live in cold water and put that into a strawberry. Will that strawberry be harmful to people? We don't know, but it may be. So it's clear that there are some important benefits to genetically modified food, but also some risks, risks that a lot of people aren't willing to take. So let's stop here and discuss any questions you have at this point.

**Speaker1:** [00:06:02] Page 15. Listening for details. A close your book. Listen to the lecture again. Add details to your notes and correct any mistakes.