



"When the facts change, I change my mind.
What do you do, sir?"

- John Maynard Keynes

Embracing Science and Accepting GMOs

Mark Lynas was once a prominent anti-GMO activist, but in 2013 he changed his views on GMOs and said he could no longer ignore the overwhelming scientific evidence proclaiming the safety of GMO crops.

Lynas, who was born in Fiji, grew up in Peru and the United Kingdom and currently lives in Oxford, England, spoke last month in Boise to Treasure Valley Idaho employees about his journey from anti-GMO activist to his new role of championing science-based environmentalism.

Lynas has published extensively on the impacts of modern human activity. His award-winning books include: *Six Degrees: Our Future on a Hotter Planet* and *The God Species: Saving the Planet in the Age of Humans*.

During his visit to Boise, Lynas spoke to *Inside Simplot* about his changed views on GMOs, his continued focus on addressing critical environmental issues like global climate change and why we must continue our focus on sustainability to ensure food security.

Q: How did you get your start as an anti-GMO activist?

A: In the mid-1990s, I was first informed that Monsanto was trying to take over the world's food supply and pollute the genetic integrity of all our natural food crops. I thought this was a terrible thing and so did everyone else in the environmental movement so off we went and occupied Monsanto and destroyed its crops. We were instrumental in kicking off this global anti-bio tech movement.

Q: What prompted your decision to change your views on genetically modified organisms (GMOs)?

A: I started working on climate change, which I believe is one of the most important global challenges we have as a species. I became a prolific science reader and communicator and

read hundreds of scientific papers on climate change, but I hadn't actually read anything on biotechnology. I probably couldn't even have told you what DNA stood for at the time. In the process of becoming better informed on climate science and on the natural sciences overall, I began to realize that I didn't know anything at all about biological science and it begrudgingly dawned on me that my anti-GMO activism had been ill-informed.

Q: How did you come to that conclusion?

A: I was talking about the scientific consensus on climate change and trying to convince skeptics, and at the same time I realized there was a similar consensus on the safety of GMOs. I couldn't go out there and denounce one set of scientific consensus, while at the same time promoting the other.