Title:
What Are Genetically Modified Foods?

Word Count:
562

Summary:
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Keywords:
GM, GE, genetics, modified, science, medicine, engineering, genetically, natural, technology, paten

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But what about genetically-modified (GM) food? Do we want to eat such food? And is it really such a big deal?

Genetic engineering enables scientists to create plants, animals and micro-organisms by manipulating genes in a way that does not occur naturally.

A recent GM Nation report concluded that the general public is overwhelmingly against GM technology, with feelings ranging from suspicion and skepticism, to hostility and rejection; there are, it was said, many more people who are cautious, suspicious or out rightly hostile about GM crops than there are supportive towards them.

Anxiety in society over genetically modified food is understandable, fuelled by a variety of causes - consumer unfamiliarity; lack of reliable information on the current safeguards in place; a steady stream of negative opinion in the media; opposition by activist groups; growing mistrust of industry; and a general lack of awareness of how our food is produced. The scientific community has not adequately addressed public concerns about GM foods, nor has it effectively communicated the value of the new technology.

The Royal Society, the UKs premier scientific body has pointed out the total lack of evidence that genetically modified crops cause harm to humans. But youd never have guessed that from the often negative media coverage.

When considering genetic engineering, it should be remembered that almost every living thing that man exploits has been genetically-modified in some way. The crops we use for food, the animals we eat, our pets and the plants in our gardens are radically different from those that existed in the so-called natural state.

Thousands of years of selective breeding have improved the yields of crops, the milk production of cows, the quantity of meat on cattle and the sizes and colours of our flowers and dogs.

But because of commercial interests, the public is being denied the right to know about GE ingredients in the food chain, and therefore losing the right to avoid them despite the presence of labelling laws in certain countries. GMOs should not be released into the environment as there is not adequate scientific understanding of their impact on the environment and human health. Genetic pollution could be a major threat because GMOs cannot be recalled once released into the environment. Labelling of all products with GE ingredients doesnt appear to be happening at the moment which is important for those people that want to avoid them.

Now my final thoughts… few would deny the benefits of modern genetic engineering in medicine. The use of genetically-modified bacteria to produce drugs such as insulin has been a revolution in medicine and saved the lives of millions. GM crops have also been hailed as the saviors of developing countries as they can be modified to prosper in dry, arid countries where there is little rainfall. There seems to be both negatives and positives to GE and GM foods….ill let you decide which food path you choose!