

COMMUNITY MARKET

Your Complete Natural Foods Grocery Store

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Your Guide to

GENETICALLY ENGINEERED FOODS

Crossing the Species Barrier

While cross-breeding and hybridization have been traditional ways to enhance desired traits in food crops for millenia, these means of exchanging genetic material have been limited to related species. Genetic Engineering allows the exchange of genes among species that would never share genetic material in nature. Fish genes have been engineered into strawberries. Botulism bacteria genes have been engineered into corn.

The insertion of these genes has been presented to the public as a highly-precise process. In fact, the extruded genes are simply blasted into cells until the desired trait is exhibited by the genetically modified organism (GMO). These genes are often poorly bonded, and can easily detach, re-attach elsewhere on the DNA strand and code for unexpected traits.

How Widespread Are GMOs?

It is estimated that 26% of the US corn crop and 68% of the US soy crop are genetically engineered. Furthermore, 70% of all processed foods are thought to contain GMO ingredients.

GMOs & the Global Food Supply

The engineering and patenting of major food crops by a few corporations further consolidates their control over the global food supply. This insures that farmers are dependent upon these corporations for seeds as they lose their own seed stocks. This monopolization creates extraordinary risk for global and local food security.

The unveiling of GMO crops containing “terminator genes” raised concerns worldwide in the late 1990s. Monsanto, the premier supplier in the GMO crop marketplace, acquired a patent to use genetic engineering to make seeds sterile, and thus unable to reseed after planting. The introduction of these seeds into the marketplace would force the grower to purchase new seed every year. While Monsanto issued a statement in 1999 claiming that they would not pursue the use of terminator technology outside of the lab, many industry analysts are skeptical as to its long term validity.

Problems with GMOs

- GMOs are minimally tested and loosely regulated. Yet, the long term effects of GMOs on human health are unknown.
- GMO foods are not labeled, denying consumers the right to choose
- GMO foods have the potential to be a serious threat to people with food allergies
- GMO crops that are pollinated via insects or the wind can pollute the crops of neighboring farms. This can cause organic growers to lose their certification
- Crops genetically engineered to contain pesticides are creating “super pests”, which force farmers to use more pesticides, escalating agricultural chemical use
- Patenting life forms enables agricultural monopolies, and disrupts the 10,000 year old practice of farmers holding and exchanging seeds.

Community Market’s Stance

Community Market strongly opposes the use of genetically modified organisms in food. We support global, national and local efforts to label and/or ban such foods until a time when they can be proved safe for consumption and the environment.

Take Action Links

Get involved and learn more by visiting the web-sites of these groups:

Californians for GE-Free Agriculture

www.calgefreesonoma.org

Center for Food Safety

www.centerforfoodsafety.org

GE Free Sonoma County

www.gefreesonoma.org

Genetic Engineering Action Network

www.geaction.org

Organic Consumers Association

www.organicconsumers.org

Union of Concerned Scientists

www.ucsusa.org

Known GMO Crops

Currently, GMO varieties of the following crops are grown outside of the lab:

- Alfalfa
- Soybeans
- Corn
- Canola Oil
- Cotton
- Tomatoes
- Radicchio (red-hearted chicory)
- Potatoes
- Papaya
- Flax
- Squash
- Sugar Beets
- Rice



In 2005 Sonoma County voters were presented the opportunity to pass a 10 year moratorium on growing GMOs in our county. While the ballot initiative failed, others of its kind have passed elsewhere and the GE Free Sonoma campaign continues to fight the introduction of transgenic technology to our area.

Avoiding GMOs

As GMO crops become more widespread every year, avoiding them becomes difficult. However, a major requirement of organic certification is that the crop is not from genetically modified seed stock. Additionally, some conventional food producers who do not use GMO ingredients will label their items “non-GMO”.