

Debate: Should We Genetically Modify Food?

<https://www.npr.org/2014/12/10/367842658/debate-should-we-genetically-modify-food>

Many plants we eat today are a result of genetic modifications that would never occur in nature. Scientists have long been altering the genes of food crops, to boost food production and to make crops more pest-, drought- and cold-resistant.

Proponents of genetically modified organisms, or GMOs, say that farmers who grow these crops are able to use fewer environmentally damaging pesticides. The increased yields of GMO crops, they also argue, are essential to feeding the world's growing population. And proponents say that numerous studies have shown that genetically modified foods are safe to eat.

Critics, however, say the claims of those benefits are overblown. They say farmers growing GMO crops have actually increased their use of herbicides. And widespread use of the crops, they say, have also led to an increase in herbicide- and pesticide-resistant weeds and insects. And, they argue, there is still no scientific consensus on the long-term safety of these foods.

Trusting scientists

Only 14 percent's beliefs match the reality — that "almost all" scientists agree that GM foods are safe to eat.

And finally, there is deep cynicism about the motives of scientists. According to the survey, Americans feel that research findings are influenced in equal measure by the following factors: the best available scientific evidence; desire to help their industries; and desire to advance their careers.

There is a much stronger connection, however, between attitudes about healthy eating and consumption of organic food. People who describe healthy eating as their "main focus" were almost three times as likely to eat organic food regularly, "GMO-free."

The case of Monsanto

<https://www.vanityfair.com/news/2008/05/monsanto200805>

BY DONALD L. BARLETT AND JAMES B. STEELE, APRIL 2, 2008

Monsanto already dominates America's food chain with its genetically modified seeds. Now it has targeted milk production. Just as frightening as the corporation's tactics—ruthless legal battles against small farmers—is its decades-long history of toxic contamination.

Monsanto's genetically modified seeds have transformed the company and are radically altering global agriculture. So far, the company has produced G.M. seeds for soybeans, corn, canola, and cotton. Many more products have been developed or are in the pipeline, including seeds for sugar beets and alfalfa. The company is also seeking to extend its reach into milk production by marketing an artificial growth hormone for cows that increases their output, and it is taking aggressive steps to put those who don't want to use growth hormone at a commercial disadvantage.

The Monsanto scandal

<http://www.rfi.fr/en/environment/20190521-death-knell-sounds-monsanto-after-lawsuits-protests>

Last week, a jury ordered the Bayer-Monsanto conglomerate to pay a \$2bn to a couple that got cancer from using its glyphosate-based weedkiller. Now 13,000 other plaintiffs are waiting to sue.

"This is the beginning of the end of the chemical era," says Zen Honeycutt, the founding Director of the non-profit [Moms Across America \(MAA\)](#).

MAA and others have campaigned for years to raise awareness about the impact of herbicides and genetically modified crops. Now, they are gaining ground. "[Today] the media is focusing on the harmful impacts of glyphosate," she told RFI.

Glyphosate is the active ingredient in the weedkiller Roundup marketed by Monsanto. It has become highly controversial because of its links to cancer.

Last week, a California jury ordered Monsanto, now owned by the German pharmaceutical corporation Bayer, to pay more than \$2 billion in damages to a couple who say Roundup caused their cancer. It is the [biggest setback](#) yet in its escalating US legal battle over glyphosate.