



What Are the Critical Issues?

Health Risks of Genetically Engineered (GE) Food

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has determined that biotech foods and crops are as safe as their non-biotech counterparts. The American Medical Association and the U.S. National Academy of Sciences have also declared biotech foods safe for human and animal consumption. In addition, since being introduced to U.S. markets in 1996, not a single person or animal has become sick from eating biotech foods. Other international groups that have concluded biotech foods and crops are safe are The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization, the International Council for Science, the French Food Agency, and the British Medical Association. The European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) has also found several biotech varieties to be safe for human and animal consumption.

See www.aarp.org/bulletin/yourhealth/a2004-04-22-sugar & www.seedsofdeception.com

The Threat To Organic And Family Farmers

Since the Stone Age, farmers have been using breeding techniques to genetically modify crops to improve quality and yield. Modern biotechnology is the most recent in a long list of tools, including selective breeding, hybridization and crossbreeding. In fact, biotechnology is the most efficient and cost effective method available for plant breeders. The use of biotechnology in plants is simply another step in the evolution of plant breeding techniques. The techniques of modern biotechnology are adapted from genetic phenomenon scientists have found widely in natural populations.

See centerforfoodsafety.org/Monsantovsusfarmersreport.cfm

Bioweapons Development

In the last few years, the U.S. government has dramatically increased funding for research on biological weapons. The research is billed as biodefense but can easily translate to offensive applications. This is the only sensible complaint that anti-biotech activists have, so it would be a good one to focus on.

See sunshine-project.org.

Healthcare

Pest & herbicide-resistant biotech varieties reduce the need for pesticides and enable farmers to use low toxicity herbicides. Studies by the National Center for Food and Agricultural Policy found that in 2003, the eleven biotech crop varieties adopted by U.S. growers increased crop yields by 5.3 billion lbs saved growers \$1.5 billion by lowering production costs, and reduced pesticide use by 46.4 million pounds. Both consumers and farmers have benefited from biotechnology. The papaya industry was nearly wiped out in Hawaii in the early 1990s due to the papaya ring spot virus (PRV). Biotechnology was used to develop papayas that are resistant to the devastating effects of this virus. Infestation by the virus has destroyed the papaya crops in Brazil and Taiwan, and without biotechnology, Hawaii's papaya industry could have been wiped out, having a crippling effect on the local economy, and agriculture industry as a whole. In fact, control of PRV by biotech papayas in Hawaii has preserved the potential for organic growers to produce papaya with non-biotech varieties.

See www.genetics-and-society.org