

## The future of Iowa agriculture: Genetic engineering

*The following is an edited excerpt.*

I grew up on a small — by today's standards — dairy farm in central Iowa, and remember my dad starting to use hybrid corn just after the second World War ended, with good results compared with the old open-pollinated varieties. Yet it took until 1970 for the country to completely change to hybrid corn.

It is drastically different today; the new genetically modified (GMO) soybean and corn varieties were first commercially available in 1996 and, by last year, were planted on more than 90 percent of Iowa row cropland. What a difference in the rate of adoption.

GMO crop plants refer to crops that have genes inserted artificially in ways that do not occur in nature, as opposed to the classic way of breeding crops such as that practiced by Nobel laureate Norman Borlaug, who founded the World Food Prize. Two companies, Monsanto and DuPont-Pioneer, own most of the patents. GMO seeds are much more expensive than seeds from crops that have not been genetically altered, primarily because of patent laws and lack of competition. Yet many countries, especially those in Europe, will not accept these crops. Who benefits and who pays?

**Read the full story here: [Dennis Keeney: The future of Iowa agriculture: Genetic engineering](#)**