

Alleged danger of GE not looking very real

The following is an edited excerpt.

Once upon a time, a food writer triggered a storm of scientific scorn when he wrote about a study finding plant molecules in the animal bloodstream and linked the results to genetically modified (GM) foods. But these weren't just any old molecules—they were RNA, strings of genetic information that weren't supposed to make it past the digestive system into the bloodstream. Yet according to the investigators, Chen-Yu-Zhang and co-authors, not only did these RNAs slip into the blood but they also altered the animal's physiology in ways that could be harmful.

The food writer who picked up on this research, Ari Levoux, leaped from this initial finding to the conclusion that if regular rice RNA could do this, then so could RNAs from GM foods. That was, Levoux urged in his article, "The Very Real Danger of Genetically Modified Food," relevant because these RNAs are one tool for developing a GM product. And if everyday RNAs from plants could do something bad to an animal, what sorts of awful, unpredictable things might the GM ones do?

The leap was a pretty big one, and several scientists and science writers, including me, had something to say about it

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