Will the FDA's proposed ban on trans fats open the door for a new generation of 'healthy' GM soybeans?

(Summary)

The Food and Drug Administration's proposal to ban trans fats could open the door for a new generation of genetically modified soybeans that could directly benefit consumers in contrast with most approved GM crops whose benefits are most directly experienced by farmers.

Monsanto and Dupont Pioneer have developed genetically modified soybeans that yield oils that are low in trans fats. They are engineered to silence the gene for an enzyme that converts oleic fatty acid into linoleic acid. Oleic acid is a monounsaturated fatty acid that is the main component of olive oil. Monsanto's beans also have a second genetic modification that lowers the level of saturated fats, which are also bad for health.

The commercial prospects for the soybeans remains unclear. Conventional soybean oil has a short shelf life, so many restaurants have already eliminated trans fats by using canola oil or palm oil. Although the GM soybeans have been approved for sale, the crops are grown on only limited acreage, although that is partly by design until Europe grants permission to import the beans.

Critics of biotechnology are raising concerns about these new generation soybeans, but agriculture companies insist that consumers and food manufacturers have so far not been "deterred" because the majority of soybeans planted in the country are already genetically modified.

Read the full, original story here: "In a Bean, a Boon to Biotech"

Additional Resources:

- "Trans Fat Ban Seen Threatening 4 Million Acres of Soybean Demand," Bloomberg
- "MU scientist: New 'healthy' soybeans can replace oils that have unsafe trans fats," High Plains Journal