20 answers on GMOs: What would conversation be like if we discarded ideology?

Grist's Nathanael Johnson, who's ongoing series on GMOs provided a welcome respite from the food ideology wars, summarizes the twenty things he learned in 2013–and how his views have evolved. "I don't expect everyone to agree with the list below," he writes, "but I do expect that reasonable people on both sides will concede (if only under their breath) that the bulk of the evidence leads to these conclusions." Among the highlights:

- **[Regulation: "](#)Genetically engineered foods are regulated much more heavily than many other new technologies, including other modes of genetically modifying crops, [like mutagenesis](#)."**

- **[Academic freedom:](#)**
  Do the big seed companies prevent scientists from doing research on their patented plants? They used to. Not anymore. I've been asking university scientists if they've run into restrictions, but the system seems to be working.

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- **[Health:](#) Every immunologist I've talked to — including those suggested to me by activists concerned about GMO allergens — told me that the risk of novel allergens arising through genetic engineering is very low.**

- **[Environment:](#) Have genetically engineered crops reduced insecticide applications? Yes, in a big way. We know for sure that farmers are now using a lot more of the herbicide glyphosate. Caveat: Glyphosate is much less toxic to humans than most other herbicides, so you could argue that increasing glyphosate and decreasing other herbicides is good.**

Johnson also offers his personal opinion on whether genetically modified foods and ingredients should be labeled. "This is opinion, not fact, but I think so," he writes. "Look, it may not make much sense to fixate on this one particular technology, but like it or not, people are fixated. Labeling removes the fear of the unknown."

Full, original article: [20 GMO questions: Animal, vegetable, controversy?](#)