

Princeton bioethicist/activist Peter Singer makes case to soften opposition to GMOs, Golden Rice

When genetically modified crops were first developed in the 1980's, there were grounds for caution. Would these crops be safe to eat? Might they not cross-pollinate with wild plants, passing on the special qualities they were given, such as resistance to pests, and so create new "superweeds"? In the 1990's, as a Senate candidate for the Australian Greens, I was among those who argued for strong regulations to prevent biotech companies putting our health, or that of the environment, at risk in order to increase their profits.

Genetically modified crops are now grown on about one-tenth of the world's cropland, and none of the disastrous consequences that we Greens feared have come to pass. There is no reliable scientific evidence that GM foods cause illness, despite the fact that they receive much more intense scrutiny than more "natural" foods. (Natural foods can also pose health risks, as was shown recently by studies establishing that a popular type of cinnamon can cause liver damage.)

Although cross-pollination between GM crops and wild plants can occur, so far no new superweeds have emerged. We should be pleased about that – and perhaps the regulations that were introduced in response to the concerns expressed by environmental organizations played a role in that outcome.

Regulations to protect the environment and the health of consumers should be maintained. Caution is reasonable. What needs to be rethought, however, is blanket opposition to the very idea of GMOs.

Read the full, original article: [A clear case for golden rice](#)