

## GMO and non-GMO farmers have been coexisting for years

In the debate over GMO and non-GMO crop coexistence, an important fact is often overlooked: farmers have been coexisting for years.

More than 4,000 individuals and organizations weighed in on USDA's request for comment on agricultural coexistence, reports Farm Futures. Many of them held similar opinions to those expressed on the Midwest Organic and Sustainable Services website. Writing for the organization, Harriet Behar finds the issue of cross-pollination larger and more complex than the USDA is acknowledging. "The current discussion does not address the difficulties faced by non-GMO farmers when dealing with GE crops," she writes.

Her arguments go beyond coexistence and call into question the health of GMOs. "The current discussion also fails to look at the environmental damage caused by the use of GMO technology, and avoids the fact that little testing is done on GMO crops to determine long-term effects on livestock and human health," she writes.

Behar calls for the responsibility of "contamination and damage caused by the GMO" to fall on the biotech companies and the USDA. She ultimately concluded that GMO seeds are unnecessary.

When discussions over coexistence diverge into arguments over the merits of GMOs, it's not hard to see why this issue has gotten complicated.

The issues with coexistence don't seem to ring true to farmers groups. "We are disappointed by the implication from activist groups opposed to modern farming practices that there is widespread disagreement when it comes to coexistence and agricultural biotechnology," wrote Bob Stallman, the president of the American Farm Bureau Federation in a [statement](#).

Ray Gaesser the president of the American Soybean Association and a farmer himself echoes these sentiments. "Farmers of many kinds of different cropping systems have a long and successful history of coexistence," Gaesser wrote in a statement (PDF). "Some farmers grow crops for high-quality seed production, some grow specialty varieties within conventional crops, some grow ornamentals or vegetables, and others grow non-GMO and organic crops."

When warring factions in the GMO debate ask 'why can't we just get along?' perhaps they should look to the farmers for inspiration.

### Additional Resources:

- [Can a GMO and non-GMO coexistence policy work in the US?](#), Billings Gazette
- [Cross-contamination and the law: Legal background on Australia's GMO crop case](#), McCullough Robertson
- [Could the Australian GMO-organic court case lead to global restrictions on biotech farming?](#), Motley Fool