

Monsanto using biotech methods to speed up traditional breeding

Say the term “genetically modified organism,” or GMO, and you’re bound to get some strong opinions. But what is it? And should we be afraid?

Like it or not, humans have been in the business of genetically changing organisms since we first started domesticating them around 12,000 BC. Simply put, favorable traits were identified in one generation of plants or animals—higher fertility, bigger size, faster maturity—and those individuals were selectively bred to produce the next generation.

Today, we don’t have to breed for desired traits over many generations, we can directly insert genes to change genomes in only one generation. The Monsanto corporation has long been at the forefront of genetic engineering when it comes to the plants we eat. They’ve been both praised and bashed for this.

I wasn’t quite sure what to expect when I headed to the Monsanto laboratories. As an ecologist, I’ve been concerned about the ecological impacts of genetically engineered organisms, much of which we don’t know. I was surprised about what I found. Monsanto is using its biotech muscle to not only genetically engineer crops, but also to beef up its traditional cross-breeding activities.

So what to make of this? Maybe this modernized cross-breeding technique will be more palatable for many people who are concerned about the health impacts of genetically engineered foods. As for me, I’ll be sure to keep a close eye on Monsanto’s turbo-charged cross breeding efforts. They may very well be part of the solution for feeding an ever-expanding global population.

Read the full, original article: [Inside Monsanto](#)