

## Fourth-generation Australian farmer: GM, chemicals and organic methods needed for sustained food security

Skepti-Forum has begun featuring essays by readers on the GMO controversy. We're going to be featuring some of them on the GLP. Jeff Bidstrup, a fourth-generation farmer in Australia, offers his take:

Neither organic production, nor total reliance on chemicals will ever allow sustained food security to become a reality. My first exposure to GM crops was in the early 1990's. We were having great difficulty controlling helicoverpa caterpillar in all crops, and in cotton they were particularly costly and increasingly difficult to control.

At the height of our desperation in around 1994, we became aware of the exciting new technology of Bt cotton. It seemed too good to be true, and some of the early varieties did not live up to expectations. But it did open the door to us of this new world, and gave us another bedrock on which to implement Integrated Pest Management. At the same time, we also started using biological control products in our crops that did not have the Bt genes, and whilst many of these were disappointing (or did not work at all!), some did and again we had another bedrock for a new era of production.

In Australia, herbicide resistance is a growing and serious issue. It is not driven by GM crops here (only a very small percentage of the cropping area is GM) but instead by a lack of rotation (and overuse of glyphosate) in our conservation cropping systems. Chemical rotation, technologically advanced sprayers, occasional use of tillage, and new ways to use current tools will all play a role.

But going back to tillage, chemicals or organic has about as much appeal and makes as much sense as going back to plowing with horses. It may sound romantic to those who have never done that, but it is neither economic nor romantic nor environmentally sustainable.

**Read the full, original article:** [Jeff Bidstrup's 500 Words | Perspective of a Fourth-Generation Australian Farmer](#)