

Modern techniques don't change the fact that humans have genetically engineered plants and animals for centuries

Genetically modified plants and animals are often feared as “Frankenfoods,” but is there really anything dangerously new about manipulation of DNA? People have been creating extreme genetic mutants with plants and animals for tens of thousands of years.

Today, using biotechnology, humans can directly manipulate the genetic code of plants and animals, making them resistant to crop-decimating diseases (GM papaya), tolerant to insect pests (Bt Corn), or incapable of breeding, thus reducing disease transmission (GM mosquitoes). But there is growing concern about GMO technology — a number of people, ranging from grassroots groups to scientific societies, worry that eating GMOs could lead to health risks and worse.

These worries ignore the long history of humans manipulating the genetic code of our foods and other organisms in the environment. In the past, we manipulated the DNA of animals and plants through selective breeding and heavy inbreeding. And we did it for the same reason we create GMOs today: People wanted plants and animals to work better for people.

Read the full, original story: [Genetic Manipulation: The First 50,000 Years](#)