

Mark Lynas: From anti-GMO activist to GMO advocate

Just under 20 years ago, when the issue of GMOs was first hitting the news, I was a dedicated anti-biotech activist. I believed that **genetic modification** was a dangerous **technology** that would harm the **environment** and dispossess **farmers** around the world. Accordingly, I joined with others in organising protests and even crop vandalism — I personally destroyed GMO field trials on multiple occasions, including for oilseed rape, sugar beet and maize in the UK.

In recent years I came to realise that this position is completely wrong. As you might expect, I am constantly asked how I came to change my mind. In particular, people are keen to know what the single “lightbulb” moment was when I realised that I had got this one wrong. The truth, however, is more prosaic: my change in opinion came gradually as a result of a better understanding of science, in particular as a result of my work on climate change. When I realised that the international scientific consensus on GMO safety was as strong as that on the reality of climate change, I had little choice — continuing to fight against GMOs would put me in the same intellectual and scientific category as climate change deniers.

It is now apparent, from 20 years of safety research and hundreds of scientific papers, that, in the words of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, “the science is quite clear: crop improvement by the modern molecular techniques of biotechnology is safe”. Thus the assumption that I had held as an anti-GMO activist, that there was something dangerous about the technology of recombinant DNA, has been proven scientifically wrong. I had no choice but to change my mind.

Read the full, original article: [Why I turned from GM opponent to advocate](#)