

AUDIO: Yale neurologist Steven Novella challenges fears of GMOs, industrial agriculture

For Medium's *Inquiring Minds*, Indre Viskontas spoke with Dr. Steven Novella, a neurologist at Yale University. Novella is a prominent voice in the skeptical movement, a scientific movement that, as he describes it, focuses heavily on explaining the truth behind "common myths—things that people believe that aren't true." He asked him to help sort out fact from fiction when it comes to industrial agriculture in general—and GMOs in particular.

"Almost everything I hear about [industrial agriculture] is a myth," says Novella. "It's such an emotional issue—a highly ideological and politicized issue—that what I find is that most of what people write and say and believe about it just fits into some narrative, some worldview. And it's not very factual or evidence-based."

One myth concerns the novelty of GM foods. Many people think that modifying genes in our food is a 21st-century phenomenon, but according to Novella, humans have been using selective breeding to create more desirable versions of plants and animals for thousands of years.

Another important myth surrounding GM foods is that they are somehow unsafe for human consumption. According to the American Association for the Advancement of Science, the research surrounding GM food is "quite clear: crop improvement by the modern molecular techniques of biotechnology is safe." What's more, GM foods are more tightly regulated than crops created with other modification methods and have to overcome more safety tests than their counterparts.

So what does Novella think accounts for our distrust of genetic modification? He points to what he calls the "naturalistic fallacy," or the reverence of "quote, unquote: what is 'natural' to an unreasonable degree."

"There's nothing inherently good or virtuous about the way things were in nature," he says. "And we've been altering them beyond recognition for thousands of years, anyway."

Read the full, original article: [No, GMOs won't harm your health](#)