

Arguments against GM crops riddled with problems including vested interests and romanticizing hunger

The year 2013 marked the 18th consecutive year of commercial cultivation of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) or now commonly referred to as biotech crops. And in just under two decades, the volume of land on which biotech crops are grown has increased from 1.7 million hectares in 1996 — the first year of commercial planting — to about 175 million hectares in 2013, according to a global report on GM crops released by the International Service for the Acquisition of Agri-biotech Applications (ISAAA) in 2014.

Yet, despite these figures showing a technology on the upward trajectory in terms of adoption, the anti-GMO lobby has continued to hold its position that farmers shouldn't grow biotech crops due to a myriad of excuses. How then can this contradiction be explained? It is important to note such excuses are perpetuated through the most advanced and efficient use of information and communication technologies. Is it okay for one segment of society to access the best technology available for their communication (or is it mis-communication?) but unacceptable to avail similar opportunities and choices to farmers to make farming more efficient?

The first problem with the whole debate against biotech crops is differentiating between perception and reality. Contrary to widely held opinion that GM technology will only benefit multi-nationals and is meant for large-scale farmers, the latest trends reveal otherwise. The second problem is overcoming vested interest. Competition from cheaper and safer biotech products is seen as a threat, thus the use of anti-biotechnology rhetoric and support for activist groups to validate their products and grow their markets. The third problem is a strong desire by some interest groups to romanticise poverty and hunger. Ironically, poverty and food insecurity provide booming businesses and a form of 'tourism' for several anti-GM lobbyists who know nothing about farming, especially in Africa.

A study by the African Development Bank and the International Food Policy Research Institute in 2012 concluded that under ideal conditions, the use of GM crops grown by smallholder farmers could improve gross margins by 114 per cent, reduce pesticide costs by 60 to 90 per cent, and improve yields by 18 to 29 per cent. Considering these overwhelming progress and opportunities, regardless of the widely spread fears about GM crops, one thing remains certain: That biotech crops have already demonstrated a crucial contribution in fighting food insecurity and environmental degradation.

Read the full, original article: [The Problems With the Arguments Against GM Crops](#)