

Widespread confusion among Canadians over what foods are genetically modified

Genetic modification has been a polarizing issue since genetically modified seeds were first approved and planted in Canada in the mid-1990s. But with consumers increasingly keen to know where their food comes from, the topic of what's in their food is also attracting renewed attention.

"I think people are genuinely interested in their food," says Ellen Goddard, a University of Alberta economist who studies consumer response to new technologies. "Something about the GM debate has intrigued them. They want to know more about how their food is produced." She adds: "Consumers will almost always say they want more information."

Still, a recent Ipsos Reid study found widespread confusion about which crops, fruits and vegetables are products of genetic engineering. The poll of 1,200 Canadians conducted in late 2013 for BioAccess Commercialization Centre, a non-profit organization that supports the natural foods industry, found that 71 per cent of respondents would avoid buying foods containing GMOs if presented with the option to do so.

Yet Canadians don't seem to have an accurate picture of what foods are genetically modified. More than 60 per cent of the poll respondents identified strawberries as a product of genetic engineering, but there are no commercially grown GM strawberries. Only 42 per cent identified tofu as a GMO product, despite that more than 90 per cent of soybeans grown in North America are genetically engineered. And 77 per cent identified chicken as a GMO product, when there's no genetically modified meat or fish in the market — although much animal feed does contain GM ingredients.

Read the full, original article: [Fields of gold ... or plains of ruin? The debate over genetically modified seeds in Alberta rages on](#)