

Liberal mag Nation on food fight: GMOs can provide sustainable food

In about 40 years, relentless dry spells may be more frequent across the Southwest, say climate scientists, and California may have more dry years like this one, in which a drought has crippled the agricultural sector. ... Since the 1980s, activists here have run a series of campaigns to require the labeling of GM products and an outright ban on GMO cultivation.

[T]he controversy over GMOs has made it more difficult to pursue his research and obtain funding. And even if his GM plants could be an important part of the solution to climate change, they may never make their way into the hands of commercial farmers. Who will invest in his plants, test them in the field and market them if they attract boycotts, protests and lawsuits that make business difficult and consumers skittish?

Many biotech researchers and agronomists argue that a combination of bad will generated by Big Ag and misdirected public outrage is stifling important technological advances in agriculture—innovations that could help prevent famine, fight crop diseases and cope with climate change. But countless activists disagree.

The Organic Consumers Association, a nonprofit agricultural watchdog group, says genetic engineering will never deliver on promises to feed a growing population and isn't a trustworthy technology.

At its core, nothing about the science of gene splicing precludes good soil management and other sustainable practices. Pamela Ronald, a UC Davis plant pathology professor, and her husband Raoul Adamchak, a farmer and former board president of the group California Certified Organic Farmers, insist that it's not only possible but necessary to combine techniques like soil conservation with genetic engineering.

They've also written a book on the subject called *Tomorrow's Table*.

Ronald doesn't point fingers at any one party for the public relations difficulties faced by biotech researchers. But she does note that the solution to a world food crisis won't emerge only in the lab.

"There seems to be a communication gap between organic and conventional farmers, as well as between consumers and scientists. It is time to close that gap," she and Adamchak conclude in *Tomorrow's Table*. "Science and good farming alone will not be sufficient."

Read full original article: [Can GMOs help feed a hot and hungry world?](#)