

GMOs safe, increase yields but fears of 'industrial ag' energizes critics

To UC Berkeley's [David Zilberman](#), the solution [to a growing, hungry global population] is straightforward: genetically modified crops. The professor of agricultural and resource economics contends that regulators, by failing to approve more GMOs, are wasting one of the best tools modern agriculture has for fighting climate change, growing more with less, and making more affordable food. His study [The Promise and Prospects of Genetically Modified Crops](#), published in the latest Journal of Economic Perspectives, touts the economic benefits of bioengineered farming—including cutting prices for consumers of meat, dairy and processed foods.

He cites at least 300 traits of genetic crop modification—including technology that would make some crops drought resistant—that aren't being used due to pressure from an anti-GMO lobby he regards as elitist.

"Why not take advantage of these new molecular discoveries?" he asks. "Small organic farming is nice. But if we really want to deal with climate change and with our growing population, then we have to take advantage of science."

Listen closely and you'll hear a collective gasp. GMOs (the acronym for genetically modified organism, meaning that a plant, fish, mammal, insect or even bacteria has had its genetic material altered in a laboratory) is as controversial as global warming itself.

Many people are troubled by the idea of messing with nature, and say they don't want their meals turned into " Frankenfoods." They are worried that taking genetic material from one organism and putting it in another could not only unhinge the ecosystem, but threaten people's health, including introducing more allergens into foods, diminishing the usefulness of antibiotics and even causing sterility.

"There has been too much emphasis on individual health of particular foods people consume, rather than the overall health effects maintaining this kind of industrial agricultural system, and the effects on the environment and the economy," says [Kathryn De Master](#), a UC Berkeley assistant professor of agriculture, society and the environment., who is anti-GMO.

Read full, original story: GMOs: Research Says They'll Help End Starvation, but Americans Remain Wary