

Prediction: McDonald's will adopt eco-friendly GMO potato

On Friday, November 7, 2014, the U.S. Department of Agriculture cleared the path to commercialization for a “genetically modified” potato developed by J.R. Simplot.

This is big. This is very big.

It's big for a host of reasons, but at the top of the list is one: French fries. The United States alone [produces](#) some 20 million pounds of potatoes each year, two thirds of which wind up in frozen products. Most of those are French fries. The American consumer eats 120lb of potatoes per year, on average. Global potato production is ~73 billion pounds/year (365 million tons). That's a lot of spuds.

It's also big because this is not the first time a biotech improved potato has been developed by innovators. In 1995, Monsanto [developed](#) a potato resistant to the Colorado potato beetle, its main pest, and shortly thereafter added resistance to major viral diseases. Though hugely popular with growers, who loved that they didn't have to spray heavy duty pesticides to kill the notoriously adaptable beetle, organic ideologues intimidated and bullied McDonald's and their major French fry suppliers into dropping the product, and Monsanto shelved it.

But Simplot (a privately held company) has much more skin in the potato game, and their own proprietary relationships with buyers. Their potato, dubbed “Innate™”, will enjoy a happier fate than Monsanto's New Leaf potato.

Some [news stories](#) have reported that McDonald's won't be buying Simplot's new potato. This, however, is a classic case of a truth being told to drive a larger lie. “McDonald's USA does not source GMO potatoes nor do we have current plans to change our sourcing practice,” a company spokesperson said in an email to [Capital Press](#).” But this betokens less than it might at first seem.

One might recall that McDonald's has been under furious assault by consumer watchdogs and assorted special interests for years (plug “McDonald's obesity” into any search engine, and stand back!). So, given that it would take Simplot at least several years to build seed stocks up to where they could even contemplate meeting an order from McDonald's, who on earth would expect McDonald's to say anything different?

This “story” of rejection is both completely manufactured and entirely unsurprising. Let's see what McDonald's says when they actually have a realistic opportunity to buy the potato. For anybody who thinks they will not avail themselves of a chance to improve their margins with less waste, and gain potential health claims as well, here's a public service announcement – stay clear of the tables in Vegas.

Read the full, original article: [Brave new potato](#)