

Israel warming to GMO crops as eco tech solution

Supplying food to a growing population without destroying the world's ecological systems is one of humanity's great challenges. Israel is helping deal with this challenge by developing agricultural technologies and efficient irrigation methods.

Interest in local research and developments related to food security brought several experts from Britain here two weeks ago as part of the European Union's [Horizon 2020](#) research and development program. The visit was organized by the British Embassy, and the Israel-Europe R&D Directorate.

One of those experts was Prof. Pat Heslop-Harrison of the University of Leicester, who is a member of the "optimistic" camp that believes technology and more efficient planning can substantially improve the world's food production capabilities, and that this can be done without destroying natural systems.

According to Heslop-Harrison, increasing the amount of food is dependent on genetic developments that improve the quality of the crops.

Genetic improvements are based on the enhancing farmers' traditional ability to cross-breed species and to transfer characteristics of wild species to species being used in food production. For example, research is now being done on how to transfer features like virus resistance from wild wheat to cultivated wheat. This also has an environmental benefit, because today such viruses are fought off with pesticides that harm the environment. But to enable the use of wild species, there's a need to preserve their ecosystems. Samples of genetic material must also be stored in gene banks like the one set up a few years ago at the Volcani Institute in Beit Dagan.

Read the full original blog: [How Israel is making the case for genetically modified food](#)