

Response to Union of Concerned Scientists: Fears about Arctic apple are misleading

As a consumer and as an agricultural scientist, I'm looking forward to the introduction of the [Arctic® apple](#), which is nearing approval by regulators in the U.S. and Canada. These apples maintain their flavor, appearance and vitamin content after cutting.

The Arctic® apple “works” through a mechanism called “RNAi.” That is a way to “turn off” a gene – in this case the genes for the enzymes that cause apples to brown when cut. RNAi is a common, natural means of genetic regulation in plants, animals, insects and many other groups, but opponents of biotechnology are trying to portray it as something worrisome.

In a [recent post](#) on LiveScience, Margaret Mellon of the Union of Concerned Scientists tries to make the case that this and other uses of “RNAi” are something new and potentially dangerous.

One misleading part of Ms. Mellon’s article is her assertion that the RNAi in a product like the Arctic® apple represents some new element of risk in the food supply. First of all this class of technology is not new in the sense that there are already several commercial, biotech crops which employ the RNAi mechanism, including the virus resistant papaya, virus resistant squash, and soybeans with [improved oil content](#).

RNAi is definitely not new to the food supply because it is a natural mechanism which exists across all sorts of different plants and animals. Just to be really clear, if you eat an organic, heirloom, locally grown fruit or vegetable or a range-fed or wild-caught animal, you are consuming small RNAs similar to those that happen to be involved in the non-browning apple.

Read full, original blog: [A Misplaced Concern About An Apple](#)