

GMOs—Good option for climate friendly farming

[Shahriyar Smith's guest opinion \("Clean fuels plan would drive GMO expansion in Oregon," March 8\)](#)

misleads in a number of ways. Energy versus food crops pose difficult choices for society — and we need lots of both. The various sources of energy — fossil and renewable forms — also have a wide variety of pros and cons. To simplify the complex tradeoffs to a “food vs. fuel” dichotomy does nothing to advance thinking about these difficult issues.

Smith writes: “It’s well documented that conventional agricultural production is part of the carbon emission problem.” This is correct. However, most forms of agricultural production that have these impacts. In fact, use of GMO crops often helps to reduce, not increase, carbon emissions compared to non-GMO systems. This is mainly due to the reduced use of tillage, which has helped to promote what many see as a revolution in agricultural methods, as recently highlighted in the New York Times.

However, to be sustainable, such systems must be managed in a careful, integrated and ecologically prudent manner, for which there appears to be great room for improvement and wide variation among farms and crops. It is clear that prudent use of GMOs can improve, not impede, climate smart farming. As renewable biofuels production is often an economically marginal activity, these added benefits may be crucial to farmer adoption.

Smith is right to point out the “clash in farming ideology.” But it’s not Big Ag versus everyone else; today, Big Ag and Big Food include organic brands that have similar or considerably larger carbon footprints, so there is no simple bad guy we can blame.

Read full, original article: [Genetically modified crops have environmental advantages, too \(OPINION\)](#)