

Jane Brody: Anti-GMO movement needs to rethink fear-based opposition

A review of the pros and cons of G.M.O.s strongly suggests that the issue reflects a poor public understanding of the science behind them, along with a rebellion against the dominance of food and agricultural conglomerates. The anti-G.M.O. movement, I'm afraid, risks throwing the baby out with the bathwater. What is needed is a dispassionate look at what G.M.O.s mean and their actual and potential good, not just a fear of harmful possibilities.

Let's start with the facts. Humans have been genetically modifying food and feed plants and animals for millennia, until recently only by repeatedly crossing existing ones with relatives that have more desirable characteristics. It can take many years, even decades, to achieve a commercially viable product this way because unwanted traits can come in the resulting hybrids. While it may be nice to have a tomato that can withstand long-distance travel, the fruit also has to ripen evenly and, most important, taste good.

Genetic engineering makes it possible to achieve a desired outcome in one generation. It introduces only a single known gene or small group of genes that dictate production of desired proteins into a plant, imparting characteristics such as tolerance of frost, drought or salt, or resistance to disease or weed killer. The technique can also be used to enhance a plant's growth or content of an essential nutrient, or, in the case of animals, reduce the feed they need.

The often-voiced concern that introducing genes from different species is unnatural and potentially dangerous ignores the fact that all living organisms, including humans, share thousands, even millions of genes with other species (we share 84 percent of our genes with dogs!).

The GLP aggregated and excerpted this blog/article to reflect the diversity of news, opinion and analysis. Read full, original post: [Fears, Not Facts, Support G.M.O.-Free Food](#)