Public wariness over GMOs rooted in “instinct” and “imperfect logic,” not science

Proponents of modern genetic food modification through biotechnology expect it to help keep civilization going by feeding people who otherwise might starve, but the public is wary at best. Genetically modified organisms, or G.M.O.s, are produced in a more systematic way today and create much faster changes to the food supply, often by adding genetic material from various species into others.

Scientists and laymen have very different opinions about these activities, typically done to boost yields or strengthen resistance to herbicides or insect damage. This suggests that there’s more to evaluating G.M. techniques than the food itself. Whatever its genetic code might say about the grain that it’s made from, man does not live by bread alone.

An analysis of 197 studies of G.M. foods by the Genetic Literacy Project, a nonprofit organization affiliated with George Mason University in Virginia, found that 24 showed them to be safer or healthier than ordinary foods, 11 showed them to be less safe or healthy and the rest showed no difference or produced inconclusive results.

But it does matter when you zoom out and examine the issue from the perspective of human instinct and imperfect logic. Sentiments contained in the old admonition not to fool with Mother Nature, combined with an innate aversion toward things considered tainted or unwholesome, help make opposition to G.M. foods sensible psychologically, though not biologically and chemically, a recent paper by a team of biological and social scientists from Ghent University in Belgium concluded.

The GLP aggregated and excerpted this blog/article to reflect the diversity of news, opinion and analysis. Read full, original post: G.M.O. Dilemma: Swaying a Wary Public