

Setting aside the debate over GMOs, what are the problems in our food system?

- **The GLP aggregated and excerpted this blog/article to reflect the diversity of news, opinion and analysis.**

I have a theory. It's a theory about why we're having such a misguided, unconstructive discussion about several hot-button food-related issues, GMOs first among them.

Our food supply has some very big problems. Although any reasonable person acknowledges the things we do well — our farms are highly productive, our food is extremely safe — it's easy, to see where we've gone wrong. Our agriculture has contributed to water-quality and soil problems and we are getting fat.

Pretty much everybody concedes that there are problems. But it's hard to find a villain. GMOs, I think, are often a proxy for the real problems in our agriculture and food supply.

I went to a whole host of smart, thoughtful people and asked one simple question: Leaving aside GMOs for the moment, what's the problem with our food?

Here is a necessarily distilled version of what they told me.

What frustrates Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack is that “there's an effort... to use food policy as a dividing issue. Red, blue. Organic, conventional. Foodie, traditional.”

There are some uniting issues, he notes. Conservation and adaptation to climate change are universal goals. We all want to reduce food waste. And no one wants children to go to bed hungry.

Vilsack wants to find more common ground: “Food should be uniting.”

The food system's purpose, according to Ricardo Salvador, director of the Union of Concerned Scientists' Food & Environment Program, should be “public well-being,” which encompasses human and environmental health. We have to align incentives with that objective. “Right now, incentives are all about productivity, because at one time that was the limiting factor.”

Read full, original post: [If GMOs aren't the problem with our food system, then what is?](#)