

Cargill developing GMO free supply chains for corn and soy, despite lower yields

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Food used to be just something you ate, but it's increasingly a statement of a consumer's values — and that's a challenge for the food and agricultural industries.

That was the upshot of a speech [May 3] by Cargill CEO David MacLennan at the University of Minnesota

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Cargill, one of the world's largest privately held companies, has a portfolio that includes — just for starters — grain exporting, meat processing. . . The company is sort of a giant conduit from farmers to big food makers and retailers. As such, it usually has a stake in the many debates over food production.

"When you think about the future of food, we are really seeing significant disruption and significant changes," MacLennan told a full house. "Consumers are increasingly making decisions . . . based on their values."

They want to know more about what's in their food, how it's made — and how animals are treated in the production process, MacLennan said.

Genetically modified organisms have been a big issue in recent years. . . Federal regulators long ago approved GMOs as safe, but consumer mistrust persists about bioengineering and the safety of GMO ingredients. . . .

Cargill has been a staunch supporter of genetically engineered crops. But at the same time, it's been developing GMO-free supply chains, in both corn and soybeans, for food manufacturers tapping a growing GMO-free market.

MacLennan said abandoning GMO crops would lead to lower crop yields. And to offset lower yields, more pastureland and forests would have to be converted to farmland to grow the same amount of food — a "trade off," he said.

Read full, original post: Cargill CEO Dave MacLennan: Food consumers are increasingly values voters