

GMO crop pioneer Marc Van Montagu: Overpopulation—not GMOs—drives monocultures

At roughly the same time as Mary-Dell Chilton and Monsanto, who were working in the United States, [Belgian molecular biologists Marc Van Montagu and Jeff Schell] were able to create the first genetically modified plant. ... [T]hey pioneered, among other applications, the insect-resistance Bt-trait in tobacco plants by incorporating the gene of the *Bacillus thuringiensis* toxin into the tobacco genome. Bt-crops are still one of the most widely applied genetically modified organisms (GMOs) in the world.

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Van Montagu, now officially retired from Ghent University as professor emeritus, remains very committed to the science. He currently chairs [International Plant Biotechnology Outreach](#) (IPBO), which aims to inform the public on the GM products and technologies and organizes training sessions for students from developing countries.

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Another common criticism is the idea that GM technologies are driving monocultures in agricultural systems. Van Montagu rejects this idea without being less critical of the dominant role of monocultures:

“There were monocultures in agriculture a long time before GMOs appeared. Monocultures are always negative. Agrobiodiversity, cultivating a lot of different crops and varieties, is obviously important. If you see how plant diseases evolve, how plants defend themselves to diseases, the more varieties, the more resilience to pathogens. It’s the economy that drives monocultures. It’s overpopulation that drives monocultures.”

Read full, original post: [Reflecting on science, society and GMOs](#)