

Viewpoint: GMOs pose 'systemic threat to humanity'? Debunking Nassim Taleb's apocalyptic assault on crop biotech

Nassim Taleb is a statistician and financial risk analyst. As interesting as his observations about the uncertain risk of large hazards are, his stance on scientific subjects, such as the supposed dangers of GMOs suggests that he should stick to his knitting. We certainly should not apply the dubious precautionary principle on the basis of imagined apocalyptic hazards that exist only in his mind.

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[Taleb] proposes that "the burden of proof about absence of harm falls on those proposing the action," but adds that "the [precautionary principle] should be evoked only in extreme situations: When the potential harm is systemic and the consequences can involve total irreversible ruin

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The use of GMOs should fall under the precautionary principle, Taleb argues, because of "the widespread impact on the ecosystem and the widespread impact on health." Although environmental contamination with bio-engineered traits is possible and poses some risk which ought to be mitigated, there is no reason to believe that it can lead to catastrophic consequences, which is Taleb's threshold for applying the precautionary principle.

Read full, original article: [Nassim Taleb says genetically modified organisms \(GMOs\) should be subject to the precautionary principle because they 'risk global ruin'. Is he right?](#)