

## US sugar industry flips the GMO script, hyping eco-benefits of glyphosate-tolerant crops

[The US] sugar beet industry is flipping the narrative, capitalizing on what was once its Achilles heel — its universal adoption of GMO seed.

Since, 2009, the nation's sugar beet crop has been almost entirely planted in seed genetically modified to resist glyphosate herbicide, which is produced at Bayer's Soda Springs plant. Lately, to strike a chord with an increasingly environmentally conscious consumer base, the sugar beet industry has been touting how biotechnology has made its crop production system far more sustainable.

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[A] 2011 summary report by the European Commission covering a decade of publicly funded research, 130 research projects and 500 research groups [concluded] "there is no scientific evidence of higher risks of GE crops for food and feed safety, or to the environment."

The environmental benefits of GMO crops, however, are well documented, [American Sugarbeet Growers Association vice president Luther] Markwart said.

When beets were raised conventionally, Markwart said herbicides applied about four times per year to control weeds stymied crop development, essentially taking a month of growth off of the final yield. Glyphosate applications in GMO beets don't set development back whatsoever, enabling farmers to produce more with fewer farming inputs.

Furthermore, GMO beets don't require hand weeding and mechanical cultivation between rows, saving farmers on labor costs and avoiding soil disturbance, which dries out soil and releases greenhouse gases.

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