Revising 10 fact-based perspectives on entrenched food myths: Gene editing is good, diet soda is fine, organics is not the answer

I’ve been trying to suss out true and false to the best of my inevitably human, imperfect ability, and for my 10th anniversary, I’m going to sum up 10 things I’m persuaded are true. Some are important, a few are trivial and all meet with staunch disagreement every time I air them.

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Gene editing can be used for good.

[Genetic engineering] has been used to create disease-resistant cassava, blight-resistant American chestnut trees, camelina with the long-chain omega-3 fats that are otherwise found almost exclusively in marine sources, [and] disease- and flood-tolerant rice.

Diet soda is fine.

Despite decades of trying, critics can’t really find a problem with them. So you get studies that show, to take a recent example, that sucralose (used in Splenda) is genotoxic. Scary! But dig in, as epidemiologist Gideon Meyerowitz-Katz did, and you find that the sucralose dosage was the equivalent of 50,000 cans of diet soda.

Organics is not the answer.

The problem [with organic farming] is the yield penalty. Estimates vary, but it’s safe to say that organic yields are about 20 percent lower than conventional, which means we need 25 percent more land to grow the same amount of food. Since land-use changes are a primary driver of climate change, that’s a non-starter. (Yes, some studies show that some organic yields match those of conventional, but to make that comparison you have to look at the highest yields in both the organic and conventional sectors, and organic never wins.) … A valuable niche. But it won’t feed the world.

This is an excerpt. Read the original post here