

From the plow to GMOs, here are 8 innovations that radically transformed agriculture and human history

What are the agricultural inventions that have had the most impact? Here's a chronological list of some of the most important in history:

1. The Plow

One of the most impactful inventions in the history of agriculture, the plow, is used to loosen or turn the soil before planting or sowing seeds. Before the combustion engine, the plow was drawn by oxen or horses.

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2. Fertilizer

Commercial fertilizer, a blend of nitrogen, phosphate, and potash, came into existence in the late 1880s and is almost universally used today. A key achievement in developing synthetic nitrogen fertilizer was the Haber-Bosch Process, which is [credited](#) with feeding half of the present world population.

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8. Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs)

While the majority of inventions on this list come either from ancient times or the Industrial Revolution, one of the most significant and controversial agricultural practices has been the relatively recent introduction of [genetically modified organisms](#) (GMOs).

The development of GMOs can be [traced back](#) to ancient practices like selective breeding and cross-breeding to develop desirable traits in plants and animals. However, that type of approach generally took a long time, and there was a limit to what it could achieve.

The first genetically modified plant (GMP) was an antibiotic-resistant strain of tobacco developed in 1983. In 1994, a delayed-ripening tomato called the Flavr Savr became the first genetically altered crop commercially released.

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