**Are Genetically Modified Foods As Good As We Are Told?**

We, the affluent consumers from wealthy countries, have always been told that the production of genetically modified foods will ensure an adequate food supply for the rapidly increasing world population; thus, it will help reduce famine. However, what we haven’t been told is the fact that these genetically modified foods are dangerous, not only to our health, but also to our environment.

An important question to begin with: What are genetically modified foods? Genetically modified foods, also known as GMs or GMOs, are foods derived from organisms which have been genetically engineered by modifying their DNA. This involves altering the genetic material by transferring genes across organisms. This act of blindly modifying a living creature’s genes before learning all the secrets behind genes could cause some serious negative effects on human health.

According to a study done in China in early 2012, genetically engineered foods affect human cell function. This, in turn, is being linked to diseases including cancer, Alzheimer’s, and diabetes. Another study conducted in Norway and published in July 2012 shows that GM genes are transferred through the intestinal wall into the blood stream. Tests performed on animals proved that increased weight gain, increased appetite, decreased immune function, inability to properly digest proteins, as well as changed intestinal microstructures were all found in the animals which had been fed GM foods. Both these studies disproved the theory that any alteration of genes in foods is harmless.

New genes may be disruptive as they enter new organisms. As they enter the human body, they are not broken down and rendered inert during digestion as pro-GMO manufacturers and scientists continue to claim. Statistics show that the increased use of GM foods in processed and fast foods since the late 1990s in the USA has led to the doubling of peanut allergy cases between 1997 and 2002 and an increase in food allergies by 265%. GMO’s are also linked to developmental disorders. The *Journal of Pediatrics* reports a 250% increase in autism in American kids as one out of every 91 kids is diagnosed with this condition. All these statistics show that allergies and autism have begun to increase after GM foods were introduced. This confirms that GM foods affect human health.

Those who believe that tempering with an organism’s genes causes an increase in its nutritional contents will be met with disappointment, since this has been proven to be a mere myth. The genetically engineered foods have altered nutritional values, but do not prove to be better biofortified foods than those produced the conventional way. As the *International Journal of Biological Sciences* revealed in 1999, manipulating a plant’s DNA actually lowers the plant’s nutrient content. Apart from health concerns, there are also some environmental concerns that we should reflect on.

The production of GM foods has detrimental environmental impacts. Some of the dangerously toxic chemical herbicides that are sprayed onto the GM crops contaminate the soil. From the soil, those toxic chemicals leak into the groundwater supplies that we in turn drink. A study performed by the National Institutes of Health (NIH) in March 2012 proved that chemicals used by the GMO industry pollute groundwater in alarming quantities. What’s more, not enough long term toxicity studies of genetically modified foods have been carried out yet. GM foods most probably cause more health hazards than we are currently aware of. Scientists have warned that the inserting of a gene into another organism’s DNA may affect idle genes in entirely unknown ways. People are gradually becoming more aware of the risks of GM foods.

Spreading knowledge and awareness about the dangers of GM foods is the responsibility of educated consumers who are concerned about the environment and human health. We, the knowledgeable and responsible consumers, are the ones who can cause a change; we are the ones who can stop the GM food disaster. The GM industry survives because of us. Let’s initiate a responsible action: Avoid GMO’s and turn organic!

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