10 Reasons to Oppose Genetic Engineering

1. Consumers' Choice Is At Stake
Here in the United States, genetically engineered (GE) foods are not labeled or separated from conventional foods. Because of this, we do not have much of a choice. Although regulations in Europe require mandatory labeling of GE food, consumer’s choice is still threatened because of cross-pollination and contamination. When genetic engineering is planted in the fields, the family shopper really has no choice. Is this how we want our food treated?

2. Health risks
Genetic engineering can make foods that were once safe to eat a threat to people with allergies. Because this process is unpredictable, new substances can develop in engineered foods. The FDA knows this and does some testing, but there are no guarantees.

Besides the new allergies, inserting genes into plants and animals can cause existing genes to react in unknown ways, including reduced nutritional values and changes in organism quality.

3. Ecological risks
There is no such thing as a free lunch. By engineering plants to be resistant to pesticides and herbicides, we necessarily affect the web of life. Other plants and animals not considered will be impacted. As has been said, when one string in the web is tugged, it pulls all of the others.

4. Biodiversity in danger
Engineering specific traits into select species threatens the planets biodiversity by upsetting the natural balance. Engineered organisms spread uncontained into the wild. They also spread their genes into the gene pool. Once engineered organisms are released, there will be no recalls, and as they continue to upset nature, it may be impossible to undo the damage.

5. Genetic engineering is about corporate control of agriculture
The reason to engineer and patent a seed is to make money off of a captive market. Although some family farmers in the US are using this technology, they are not the driving force behind its creation. Genetically engineered crops further lock farmers into a cycle of dependence on quick fix techno schemes with royalty fees and debts to the bank.

6. Organic Agriculture is at Risk
Genetically engineered plants do not recognize buffer zones and containment fields. They will drift and they will be carried wherever fate will have it. Contamination of conventional and organic crops isn’t a matter of if, it’s a matter of when. These new creations have proven impossible to contain outside of a lab.

So who will be liable when this contamination occurs? Not the Biotech companies. Currently there are few if any laws assigning liability to life’s new architects. The laws that do exist are concerned with intellectual property rights. It seems the court want to be certain you pay for every GE seed that grows, whether you planted it or not.

7. Economic misjudgments
These crops cost more money than expected. They also carry loads of new risks. Scandals like the Starlink contamination caused Asian markets to shut down to American corn
8. Increase in insecticide and herbicide use
When plants are engineered to resist insecticides, farmers spray more insecticide on the plants. Couple that with pests building up insecticide resistance because of the larger usage and you have a company selling more chemicals, an environment more polluted, and a farmer more dependent.

9. Monopolization of food production
The spread of genetic engineering coincides with widening legal possibilities to patent plants and their genes. Patents on food bear the intrinsic danger that a few transnational corporations obtain exclusive control over the whole chain of food production, from the gene to the dish. Initial conflicts over patent rights in Northern America show how, in the future, farmers may lose some of the rights concerning their crops. Patents on life are not compatible with the concept of intellectual property rights. They confer rights which go far beyond what the "inventor" has really accomplished.

10. The myth of fighting world hunger
The promise to overcome worldwide hunger with the help of genetic engineering is not credible. Research and development of genetically modified plants are organized privately and lie in the hands of only a few big corporations in the North, which protect their products through patents. This development is addressed to the needs of intensive industrialized farming in the earth’s temperate zone. The genetically modified plants don't yet contribute to the solution of agricultural problems in the tropics. Patents and technology fees prevent the transfer of technology from North to South. Deficient nutrition is not a problem of food quantity, but of power and distribution. There is no scarcity of food in the world, but grave deficiencies in access to food and distribution.

Source: Basic outline and text adapted and borrowed from The Church's Statement on Genetic Engineering 2003 [1].

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