

GM food

If you read the newspaper regularly you will have hardly failed to notice that GM-food is a very controversial issue at the moment. Some experts and a lot of biotech companies and food multinationals such as Masterfood or Nestlé do not tire to praise the endless possibilities of GM food, whereas green activists and NGOs warn about unforeseeable risks. Let's take a closer look at the issue.

One of the greatest advantages of GM-food is the possibility to grow crops faster and so the productivity increases and we have more food for our overpopulated planet. Especially in Third World countries where a lot of people are starving and often die because of starvation it could be a great alternative to "normal" agriculture because farmers could still plant their crops but for more people than before. Maybe this could even stop starvation in Third World countries, such as many African countries, and millions of people would stay alive.

In our consumer society it is increasingly important to live an environmentally friendly life and make a conscious choice of what to eat or not to eat. Normal crops often have to be sprayed with herbicides and pesticides. GM crops need much less chemistry. Thus are not only environmentally friendlier, but also potentially healthier. In the the US for instance they grow tomatoes which are genetically modified to be resistant against viruses and diseases.

These advantages, however, also have their drawbacks. Sure it would maybe stop the starvation in Africa, but experts say that an increase of genetically modified food in developing countries would cause those countries to become even more dependent on industrial countries because the production of seeds and also genetic engineering is controlled by them. But wouldn't you rather depend on another country than see millions of people dying of starvation?

However, scientist who are against genetically modified food say that the biggest threat by this food is that they can have harmful effects on the human body. At the moment we just don't know a lot about possible long-term effects. Some experts think it could cause cancer - a frightening prospect!

I guess we should stay away from genetically modified food today because we just don't know enough about it and about possible consequences. Perhaps this will change over the next years. And, of course, we should stay far away from freakish things such as "orangeapples".