Public Awareness and Genetically Modified Foods: What is their relationship?

What are genetically modified foods?
“Genetically modified” foods, or GMs, are living organisms such as animals, plants, or bacteria that have their genetic make-up altered in some way to make products, for nutritional value, or for health reasons. “Biotechnology” is a more general term referring to a living organism’s components that are used to make a product. Genetically modified crops were first made available in 1996 and were generally used by crop producers.

What are genetically modified foods used for?
Genetically modified foods are used to make products such as beer, wine, cheese, and yogurt, as well as medicines, vaccines, foods and their ingredients, feeds, and fibers.

What are the advantages of genetically modified foods and biotechnology?
- Enhanced taste and quality
- Reduced malnutrition time for plants
- New products and growing techniques
- Increased resistance for disease
- Better yields of meats, eggs, and milks
- Improved animal health
- Better conservation practices for the environment
- Combat obesity

Source:
http://rgcb.res.in/images/index_pic.jpg

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www.plantsci.cam.ac.uk/.../files/page0_1.jpg

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What are the disadvantages of genetically modified foods and biotechnology?

- Increase of allergens for humans
- Biopiracy
- Ethical problems such as tampering with nature by altering genes and stress for the animal
- Labeling problems
- Other unknown risks

How does public awareness of biotechnology affect how the public views it?

Studies conducted over the last five years have shown no conclusive evidence that the public awareness of biotechnology plays any sort of role in their willingness to buy genetically modified products. However, the public does seem to have strong opinions about the subject but these opinions are not related to the level of awareness the public has for biotechnology and genetically modified products. People in Europe, Asia, and the United States generally have positive views of biotechnology, associating it with healthy and nutritious products.

Conclusion

Public awareness and biotechnology do not go hand in hand; however, the public’s view of biotechnology and genetically modified foods and products is a positive one. Although the public’s opinion is positive, it is not because people know a great deal about genetically modified products, but instead, is because the benefits seem to outweigh the known risks associated with biotechnology.

References: