Eating Healthy: Eating Genetically Modified Food

What is genetically modified (GM) food?

The food is produced with livestock or crops that are genetically engineered for a variety of benefits. This technology can do several things to food and grains such as increase yield or nutritional value. The beneficiaries include anyone from producers to consumers.

Do people really eat genetically modified food?

Yes, consumers eat it often, though they may not know it. The United States does not require genetically modified food to be labeled with a few exceptions. Breakfast cereals frequently contain modified grains.

How do consumers react to the idea of their food being genetically modified?

The consumers that read labels telling them that the product has been modified, are reluctant to buy the product. When presented with the benefits, people are more willing to buy it. This shows a distrust of biotechnology from the uneducated consumer.

Table 2. Huffman et al. Source: Journal of Agricultural and Resource Economics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number and Percentage of Individuals Who Bid Less for the GM-Labeled Food than for the Standard-Labeled Food</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number</td>
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<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tortilla Chips</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vegetable Oil</td>
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<tr>
<td>Russet Potatoes</td>
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<tr>
<td>All Three Items</td>
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<td>At Least One Item</td>
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Conclusion

Despite consumer distrust, GM crops are still produced and consumed, because everyone benefits.

Producers

- Resistance to pests
- Increased yield
- New uses for crops

Consumers

- Increased nutritional value
- Less nicotine in cigarettes
- Lower prices

The consumers need to become aware of the gains associated with genetic modification. Scientists will continue to improve food if there is a market for it. There is potential for non-GM food to be marketable unless the consumer becomes aware of the benefits of GM food.

Additional information about this Fact Sheet may be obtained from:

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References


Source: http://www.nsf.gov/statistics/seind02/c7/fig07-09.gif