

GENETICALLY MODIFIED CROPS

TO FEED THE WORLD?

This would require FOREST CLEARANCE for VAST MONOCULTURES, using fertilisers, pesticides and herbicides that damage humans and wildlife, as well as soil life and structure, thus speeding erosion and desertification. Such chemicals use for their manufacture vast tonnage of fossil fuels, emitting CO₂ and thus speeding global warming that will disrupt the climate and destroy the environment.

Foods should be grown vegan-organically in small fields and orchards and on forest trees that can yield maximum food and at the same time check global warming.

Genetic engineering involves the removing of a gene from the nucleus of a cell and introducing it into that of an entirely different species, sometimes even from an animal to a plant. To get the foreign gene accepted, vectors - usually a kind of virus - are used to carry and insert it.

The procedure is so novel that there is no possibility at present of estimating the effect, especially over a long term, on the health of the people who eat the food so produced. Also there is no way of telling how the GM crops will affect the wildlife and the environment. Some people fear that pollen from GM crops could spread and create wild crops that 'run amok'.

Multi-national companies, seeing a prospect of great profits, are rushing ahead with the procedure, but they are arousing considerable opposition worldwide. People feel that the very basis of life is being interfered with, probably with irreversible effects. Reactions on the part of politicians, scientists and others are often surprisingly erratic. Evidence of the power of multi-national companies is disturbing.

Some multi-national companies plant to genetically modify important crops so that they produce sterile seeds. Then farmers would have to buy seeds for sowing each year instead of saving their own. This would be a serious blow to the self-sufficiency of farmers, especially the small ones in the Third World.

Monsanto officials and their supporters claim that genetic engineering of crops would make an important contribution to feeding the exploding human population. The opposite would probably be true, as it would involve clearing forests for huge fields of monocultures. The crops would be fed with artificial fertilisers that damage soil life and structure and thus speed erosion and desertification. They would be protected by pesticides and herbicides that damage wildlife and human health. Enormous tonnage of CO₂ emitting fossil fuels would be used to make the chemicals, thus increasing global warming which is already causing serious climate disruption and could destroy the environment.

The whole issue of GM food is arousing opposition world wide, and so it should, for the securing of food is the prime activity of all living things. Beyond that, people see genetic engineering as interfering with the very basis of life - 'playing God'. Moreover, the promoters cannot possibly know the long-term effects of their actions.

All our actions should be based on compassion for all that suffers. Livestock farming involves suffering for highly sentient creatures, especially modern farming. It should be phased out and the farmers should be compensated only if they plant trees instead. Trees maintain the water tables and store the carbon from the CO₂ that is causing global warming. Livestock emit methane, a powerful greenhouse gas. Global warming is the gravest threat to life on this planet: already the ice caps are melting and the violent climatic effects that we were warned about are happening.

MCL advocates very different food policies. Food should be grown locally as far as possible, thus ensuring freshness and eliminating unnecessary packing and transport which increases global warming. Only a minimum of processed foods should be used - sources of vitamins B₁₂ and D, which we can no longer get safely from nature.

Food should be grown vegan-organically in small fields and orchards and on food-crop trees in mixed forests. Such trees can yield the maximum food per acre and sequester carbon indefinitely.



MCL, 105 Cyfyng Road, Ystalyfera, Swansea SA9 2BT, UK.