

Are genetically modified foods safe?

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We once had a steer named Lucky. As we were loading calves to go to the sale barn, Lucky started limping. Sale barn buyers don't buy calves that limp or will pay little or nothing for them. We kept Lucky to be a fattened steer. When we started to feed him corn, he wouldn't eat it. We had never heard of a steer or cow that wouldn't eat corn.

We tried various sweeteners and enticements to get him to eat corn. Nothing worked. So we asked several cattleman friends for suggestions. One friend, Jim Knopik from Fullerton suggested Lucky wouldn't eat genetically modified corn. His advise was to try to feed Lucky non-GMO corn. Lucky loved the non-GMO corn and it was better for us as we would now have a natural steer. Natural food is produced or made without chemicals or artificial products.

The public has been told by the Food and Drug Administration and the food industry that genetically modified (GM) foods are safe, properly tested and necessary to feed a hungry world. This isn't so! One of the most dangerous and radical changes to our food supply are genetically modified organisms (GMOs). These largely unregulated ingredients are found in 60-70% of the food in the U.S. and should be avoided.

We, as consumers, think the FDA has tested GM foods through rigorous, in depth and long term studies. Actually the agency has no testing requirements. In fact the agency relies on research from companies like Monsanto whose research is designed to avoid finding problems.

We have to realize there is a revolving door between the agency and the companies the FDA is to regulate. When the first George Bush was in the White House, there was a mandate to FDA to promote biotechnology. The person in charge of this policy was previously an attorney for Monsanto and later returned to Monsanto as their vice president.

The FDA claims they are unaware of any information showing GM crops were different in any important way from non-GMO crops and they do not require testing. But 44,000 internal FDA documents made public by a lawsuit show this is not true. The overwhelming concerns from the FDA's own scientists was that GM foods are quite different and could lead to unpredictable and hard-to-detect allergens, toxins, new diseases and nutritional problems. Sorry to say those scientists, who had suggested to their superiors there be long term studies, were ignored.

Even though evidence was presented of this probable fraud at the FDA at a Washington D.C. press conference in 1999 with the media in attendance, the media did not alert the public. Most Americans know so little about this subject, that only one in four consumers know if they have ever eaten a GM food. Most processed foods contain derivatives from the four major GM crops: soy, corn, cottonseed and canola.

As for ourselves, we buy and eat mostly natural and organic foods. This is the only way one can eat more healthful foods with less GMO derivatives. Organic and natural foods are now more assessible. Most grocery stores now have natural and organic sections. We belong to a food buying club where we buy more healthy foods. The Nebraska Food Cooperative sells natural foods produced in Nebraska. For contact information on food buying clubs or Nebraska Food Cooperative email CNCC. For more information on GMO foods, read Jeffery Smith's "Seeds of Deception: Exposing Industry and Government Lies about the Safety of the Genetically Engineered Foods You're Eating" and "Genetic Roulette: The Documented Health Risks of Genetically Engineered Foods".

Our thanks to Lucky, who opened our eyes to the risks of GMO foods.

The Spragues are retired airline employees who returned to Central Nebraska and the family farm. They are concerned with quality of life, peace and justice. Central Nebraska Concerned Citizens take up topics that affect citizens in Central Nebraska and the world.