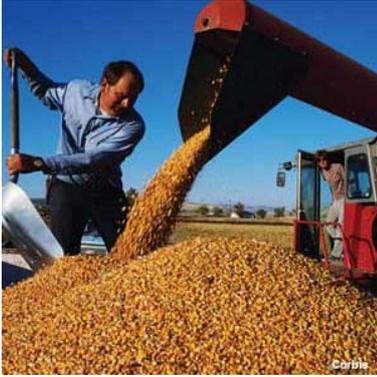


Take Action Against Genetically Modified Food

By [Kristen Metz](#) on Wed, 08/24/2011 - 3:36pm



Genetically modified food has long been criticized as an unsustainable and unhealthy option for human consumption all over the world. The process of genetically engineering food involves changing the genetic structure of a crop to make it resistant to viruses or pests or to add certain vitamins or minerals. Proponents of GM food argue that genetically engineering food could solve world hunger, particularly in poor areas where food production is limited. The main issue, however, is that GM food has a disastrous impact on the environment and is placing the responsibility of food production into the hands of large corporations. The United States government has recently begun taking steps to facilitate the widespread production of genetically engineered crops.

Last month, the Obama administration, as part of an effort to increase the nation's exports, joined with the agricultural biotechnology industry to bolster the production of genetically modified crops. Hoping to shed light on the perils of GM food, the group Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility (PEER) responded to this by suing several government organizations to make the details of the agreement public. The Obama administration has been working to promote genetically engineered crops and to oversee their production by attempting to remove restrictions on growing GE crops, even on national wildlife refuges. Now, a new report by the United Nations Environmental Program (UNEP) in conjunction with the [International Water Management Institute](#) titled "[An Ecosystem Services Approach to Water and Food Security](#)" has highlighted the unsustainable impacts of genetically modified food.

In the preface of the study, the authors point out that the problems of world hunger and water scarcity in a rapidly expanding global population is "a central challenge for this generation," noting that of equal importance is keeping "humanity's footprint within planetary boundaries." The study goes on to note, "it is clear that enormous opportunities exist to increase food production in ways that make optimal and sustainable use of water and other resources. This means that we can feed a global population without massive and irreversible damage to our ecosystems."

In the comprehensive study of food production, the UNEP examines the issue of a dwindling food supply as well as the globally rising price of food. The study points out that water scarcity has a direct impact on the global food supply. The study suggests that "maintaining healthy ecosystems to ensure water availability and other ecosystem services is essential for long-term food security." The problem, however, is that many ecosystems have already been extremely damaged by the unsustainable production of food.

As a solution to the unsustainable growing methods of genetically engineered crops, the UNEP study suggests several methods to change the way food is produced around the world. The most important step is to "manage ecosystems as a continuum of agroecosystems that not only produce food, but also deliver a whole range of other ecosystem services necessary for long-term food security." Other important steps involve proper management of water and land to promote crop diversity and integrity of habitats.

Even though the evidence is clear that genetically engineered crops are a threat both to health and to the environment, the government has chosen to ignore the ecological impact in an effort to increase exports. Whereas genetically modified food has recently been banned in at least some capacity in several European countries, the U.S. has yet to recognize the harm of GM food.

To voice your concern about the United States' decision to support the production and export of genetically modified crops, sign this [change.org petition](#). Another option is to protest the government's support of GM food by choosing to buy organic and local produce, which is a healthier option for both you and the planet.

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