

Seven myths about GM crops, and the truth behind them

MYTH 1: GM crops can feed the world

REALITY: There are no GM crops designed to deliver high yields. Genetic engineering is ill-adapted to solve the problems underpinning hunger and malnutrition - it reinforces the industrial agriculture model that has failed to feed the world (and instead drives biodiversity loss, climate change and poor health)

MYTH 2: GM crops hold the key to climate resilience

REALITY: Genetic engineering lags behind conventional breeding in developing plant varieties that can help agriculture cope with climate change. Climate resilience heavily depends on farming practices promoting diversity and nurturing the soil, not on the over-simplified farming system GM crops are designed for.

MYTH 3: GM crops are safe for humans and the environment

REALITY: Long term environmental and health monitoring programmes either do not exist or are inadequate. Independent researchers complain that they are denied access to material for research.

MYTH 4: GM crops simplify crop protection

REALITY: After a few years, problems such as herbicide-resistant weeds and superpests emerge in response to herbicide tolerant and insect resistant GM crops, resulting in the application of additional pesticides.

MYTH 5: GM crops are economically viable for farmers

REALITY: GM seed prices are protected by patents and their prices have soared over the last 20 years. The emergence of herbicide-resistant weeds and superpests increases farmers' costs, reducing their economic profits even further.

MYTH 6: GM crops can coexist with other agricultural systems

REALITY: GM crops contaminate non-GM crops. Over 400 incidents of GM contamination have been recorded globally so far. Staying GM-free imposes considerable additional, and sometimes impossible, costs for farmers.

MYTH 7: Genetic engineering is the most promising pathway of innovation for food systems

REALITY: Non-GM advanced methods of plant breeding, such as marker assisted selection (MAS) and genomic selection are already delivering the sorts of traits promised by GM crops, including resistance to diseases, flood and drought tolerance. GM crops are not only an ineffective type of innovation but they also restrict innovation due to intellectual property rights owned by a handful of multinational corporations.

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Adapted from Greenpeace (2015) Twenty years of Failure

<https://www.greenpeace.org/international/publication/6966/twenty-years-of-failure/>